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MEMOIRS

OF A

CHEQUERED LIFE.

MEMOIRS

OF A

CHEQUERED LIFE.

BY

CHARLES STRETTON.

"Have I not had to wrestle with my lot?
Have I not suffer'd things to be forgiven?
Have I not had my brain seared, my heart riven?
Hopes sapp'd, name blighted, life's life lied away?
And only not to desperation driven,
Because not altogether of such clay
As rots into the soul of those whom I survey."

Childe Harold.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHEQUERED LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"A Brick-fielder."—A Fishing Speculation at Night.—Disgust at Night Toil.—The Enterprise given up.—Materials sold off.—Melbourne.—Turn to Brickmaking.—Mishaps at Brickmaking.—Give up Brickmaking.—Proposition to start for Van Diemen's Land.—Canvas Town.—The "Ellen Jane."

A MONTH had passed since the return of the brothers from Bendigo, and summer had commenced; the only drawback to that delightful time of year in Victoria being the hot winds, which come from the north, and which bring with them such clouds of dust that it is almost impossible to leave the house; and which dust it is impossible to keep out of the house. You find your meat covered with it at table; everything you touch is gritty; added to which the heat is so intense, that an insupportable languor pervades the whole system; in fact you feel incapacitated from doing anything.

Walking one day, accompanied by Carroll and his brother, some two miles from Melbourne, by the side of the Yarra Yarra, and talking over our intentions, we came upon a log-hut, situated in the midst of the tea-scrub which there borders both sides of that river; it was one of those frightfully hot days. Being very thirsty, from having our mouths filled with dust, we entered the hut to beg a pannikin of water.

The owner of the log-cabin was a fisherman; that is to say, he was the possessor of a seine-net and a whale-boat. In the course of conversation, we learnt from him that he plied his occupation at night-time, in the bay, from eight to ten miles distant from where we then were. I remarked that I should like to live altogether on the water, during the prevalence of the "brick-fielders," as the north winds are called; when Carroll said—

"Stretton! you understand netting, do you not?"

"Yes," I said; having some years back, had a great deal to do in that way, both with trammel and pitching-nets.

"What will you take," said Carroll, addressing the owner of the hut, "for the seine and the whale-boat?"

"Seventy pounds," answered the man.

"How many yards is it in length, and how many in depth?" I asked.

"It is upwards of seventy yards long, and two yards and a half deep; the mesh is an inch and a half, and it is quite new," was the reply.

Telling him that he was asking more than three times its value, we proceeded to stretch the net out for inspection by the side of the river. The net was in good order, as was the boat; and, in an hour's time, the whale-boat and seine-net were the property of Edward Carroll; he paying down fifty pounds, in notes of the Union Bank.

There is no doubt that Carroll would have given the whole sum demanded, rather than not have had it; it was a fresh hobby, and how well the speculation turned out, the sequel will show.

The reader may think it odd that a young fellow, in Australia, above all countries in the

world, should wander about with so much money in his pocket; but such was his habit, and it would have been the same, had he at the time been the possessor of a thousand pounds.

It was laughable to see Edward dive down into his breeches-pocket, and draw forth a bundle of notes, a quantity of loose silver, pieces of tobacco, ditto string, and a large clasp-knife, all jumbled up together. He, poor young fellow, seemed excessively delighted with his purchase; and although I might not have felt equally sanguine as to the success of our undertaking, the idea pleased me much.

It was agreed that we were to commence operations the night following, if we could succeed in finding a fourth person to join us, for it took that number of hands to "work the oracle," as Edward would call it.

We returned at once to Collingwood, in order to rake up whatever we could find in the shape of warm clothing, and to lay in a small supply of necessaries, for the work we were about to undertake was of a very cold nature, being all night-work. It is true that when we

arrived at the spot at which we purposed camping, we should only be two miles from Sandridge, where everything necessary could be procured by paying for it.

We were not long in finding a fourth to make up the boat's complement; which consisted of Edward, his brother, Landon, and myself.

So sanguine was my friend of success, that he began talking of the wages that he was to pay us; but I recommended him to delay any settlement upon that head, until after two or three days' trial.

The weather, the day following the purchase of the net and boat, was heavenly; and with pleasurable anticipations we started for the log-hut, each carrying his own blankets and necessaries, with a portion of the general stores that we had purchased. So fine was the weather, that we scorned taking any tent, intending to lay ourselves down in the day-time among the tea trees which grow luxuriously all along the sandy bay.

At three o'clock in the afternoon of that day, we jumped into our boat, having stowed every-

thing away, and suffered her to drift down the river, merely dipping our oars now and then to keep her head straight. In rounding a well-wooded point, we came upon at least twenty pelicans. The huge birds were standing all together on an island of mud, and suffered us to come within twenty yards of them. We had no gun with us, and if we had, it would have been only a piece of barbarous cruelty to kill any of them, as we could not have put a foot upon that treacherous mud. We continued to drift on until at last we reached a beautiful little sandy bay. The tea-trees came down close to the water's edge at high tide; but one little nook we discovered, which was immediately fixed upon by general consent, as the spot on which to camp. Hauling the boat upon the sand, we commenced arranging everything, intending to make some stay at that pretty spot.

There was no lack of fire-wood about us, and thus a collection was soon made which we considered sufficient to last two days. Could any of our relations have seen us then, they would have said that there never was a happier

party. We had some few hours to ourselves before we commenced work. The steaks were frying in the pan, and the potatoes were being roasted among the wood ashes; the bottles of grog were all placed where no sun could reach them, and above all, we had found a little trickling stream of tolerable water. Thoroughly believing, that we had neglected nothing that could conduce to our comfort, the plates and dishes were produced and filled, when lo! to our consternation, it was discovered that there was no salt. The change in each countenance may be fancied: we were at least two miles from Sandridge, and not a hut near us. Eat my meat without salt, and plenty of it too, I never could, so I at once volunteered to walk to Sandridge and procure a supply.

"Never, old fellow!" said Carroll, jumping up; "Dick and I are younger than you; we'll go together, for I cannot swallow those tough steaks, which had life in them half-a-dozen hours ago, without that well-known seasoning. Come along, Dick."

In spite of my entreaties they would go; and

in an incredible short space of time we saw them returning, evidently loaded with more than that useful condiment.

Of course, neither of us who remained behind thought of commencing dinner before the return of our friends, and which, by-the-by, was in consequence fearfully over-done, which did not take away from the toughness. Had it been a slice out of Lord Darnley's boot that is shown to all visitors at Holyrood Palace, it could not have withstood the attacks of our teeth with greater success. Nevertheless, with the aid of pickles we all managed to allay our hunger; and the circling glass and never-failing pipe brought the meal to a close.

At sunset (there is little or no twilight in those regions) we commenced our operations. Richard Carroll was to remain on shore and hold one end of the cork line; Edward and Landon were to row the boat whilst I paid out the net. All went on smoothly enough, and our first draught was a good one. Five more draughts we made that night; and we pronounced our first attempt a decided success. Fishing

by night is decidedly cold work, even during the summer months of the Antipodes, and it was with great difficulty that I could get my friends to make the two last draughts. As for myself, I was wet through to the waist, and so cold that I could not have worked any more.

Leaving the net and fish in the boat, we again hauled our little Norwegian craft upon the land, and commenced taking off our wet clothes, which done, and the fire replenished, we threw ourselves upon the ground with our feet towards the flames to sleep away the time until the fish carts would come down from Melbourne, which we were informed would be the case at four o'clock every morning.

The sun rose brilliantly, and almost as soon as the fiery god showed his round face, were the fish carts perceptible, advancing towards us along the sands. There were numerous fishing parties up and down the bay; and decidedly the Melbourne purveyors of that article were not choice in their selection: anything in the shape of the finny tribe was sure to sell, and Edward made three pounds odd shillings by the first

night's work. Yet that sum would never pay, thought I, considering the price of provisions, and the number of the mouths that were to be filled.

The fish carts had no sooner left us, than we shook out our net and spread it upon the sand to dry; the tide was on the ebb, and therefore this could be done in perfect safety.

Nothing could be more tediously idle than the manner in which the day was spent; and one day was like unto the next. As there was no use attempting to work the seine before darkness came on, all were at liberty to amuse themselves as it suited them, so long as one remained to take care of the property. Now idleness invariably begets mischief: I do not mean to insinuate that I was one whit better than the rest of my companions; but having nothing to do we used to wander to Sandridge, at that time a large township, and now, I hear, with that of Emerald Hill, boasting of a population over twenty thousand; so I am given to understand. There were two or three very large hotels at the ormer, and to those accursed places of resort

we constantly went. No good could come from it; it naturally rendered us quite unfit for work, and when the time came for real drudgery, accompanied with darkness and wet, I could see amongst the party a slight disposition to flinch.

That night, as soon as the sun went down, we were again on the water: about the same success attended us, but with all my entreaties they would only make three hauls.

"It is so deuced dark and cold," one would say.

"Confound it! it's all very well working by daylight, but hang me if I like this work," another would chime in.

Edward said nothing; and as there was no light in the boat I could not tell how he looked.

I tried my utmost to keep them up to their work, but failed.

As usual, the carts came in the morning and our fish was sold.

It was the sixth or seventh night that we commenced our distasteful task (and I may as well now say our last), when we fell in with a

misadventure which put the *grand coup* upon the fishing speculation. It was this: the night was fearfully dark; we had made two hauls which were tolerably successful, when on making our third and last compass the net fouled; ordering the rowers to pull gently back whilst I tried the cork line to find if possible where the hitch could be, I discovered that our net was firmly grappled by some huge piece of timber. Telling Edward and Landon to pull out gently towards the middle of the bay, I, by the merest chance imaginable, got it clear; I then told them to pull gently to shore whilst I drew the net into the boat: of course there were no fish, but the net was saved, for there was not one mesh broken.

Everybody appeared heartily sick and tired of the work; I endeavoured to prevail upon them to drop down, at daylight, a few miles further down the bay, but no—they struck, not for want of wages, but for warmth. Making all safe for the night, and attending well to our fire, we again stretched our shivering limbs before the burning scrub; but not before our

clothes had been changed, and a nobbler of rum had been handed to each.

I felt annoyed, and could not sleep; I knew Edward's temper so well, that I was confident he would not brook a failure; and I made up my mind that our fishing speculation was at an end.

When the carts came round in the morning, they found but a scanty supply of fish from our party; and few were the shillings that Edward put into his pocket.

As usual we all went to work; one cooking, another gathering fuel, whilst Carroll and I spread the net to dry.

"I tell you what, Charlie," said Edward, "we shall make no hand of this fishing game, and you must allow that it is uncommon cold work. Hang me! if I would not rather break stones at ten shillings the square yard. Then again there's no fun in it; you cannot see what you are about; you are wet from the beginning of the business to the end of it; and to crown all, there's no profit. Charlie, we must cut it."

"What you say, Carroll," I rejoined, "is

perhaps true; but have you given the business a fair trial? The truth is, we are all too lazy to work; and as for your brother Dick complaining, it is a farce, for he has never wetted his shoes yet; all he thinks of is to establish a good laugh, and to eat, and to drink. There never was a merrier fellow than your young brother, but he is no good among working parties.

"Now, look here, Stretton," continued Edward; "I think I can sell the boat and net well at Sandridge: I saw a man there yesterday, and he said that he wished he could fall in with a good seine and boat; I will see him to-day about it."

"Do as you like," I said, "the property is yours; but take care you are not done: I think we ought to change our ground and try it on for a few more days. You do not mean to say that our little dilemma of last night has shaken your faith in our success?"

"No, not that," he went on, "but I do not like the work; there is no fun in it."

"Very well, that is enough; let us finish spreading the net, and then to breakfast," said

I, as I shook out the lead-line in perhaps a somewhat hasty manner.

Breakfast was ready when we rejoined our mates; Dick was in his accustomed humour, and I must say that I never saw him out of temper; and when Edward stated his intention of disposing of the boat and net, he made no remark.

Breakfast over, I told my three friends that they might go to Sandridge, and that I would wash up and look to all the goods and chattels that appertained to us. Too pleased, they all started; and after my disagreeable work was over, I laid myself down and began to ruminate.

"Well," said I to myself, "I wonder what will be the next task that I shall undertake; and will my proverbial bad luck stick to me? I know not why it is so, but in every instance that I have attempted anything in union with others, it has been unsuccessful; the next trial shall see me work alone."

I felt a degree of comfort after giving utterance to that soliloquy, and I made up my

mind to lose no time in finding some employment. There is, or was in those days, nothing too menial for a gentleman to undertake in the colony of Victoria.

I felt certain that Carroll would lose greatly in selling his net and boat. Long and weary passed the hours that my friends were away; and it was not until evening that I could see them coming along the sands, and a fourth person with them. I instantly began to arrange matters for cooking, and by the time they joined me I had some bacon and eggs frying on the fire.

"What! not had your dinner yet?" said Carroll.

"No—of course not," I replied; "I waited for you."

"Oh! we have had ours; and a rare one too. I am sorry that you should have waited," said Edward. "We have sold the boat and net."

"You have—have you? then I only hope it has fetched its value," I replied.

Carroll, and the man who had accompanied him, turned away towards the boat; and in five

minutes the stranger was rowing down the bay towards Sandridge.

"Tell me, Carroll," said I: "what did you get for the boat and net?"

"Why, to tell you the truth," he replied, in a hesitating manner, "I sold it very cheap; I tried him hard, but he would not give more, and I wanted to get rid of it; I let him have it for ten pounds."

"It is a pity, Carroll," I continued, "that you did not sell the pots and pannikins, gridiron, and frying-pan at the same time: you might perhaps have made the pounds guineas; and then, to do the thing handsomely, you might have made him a present of the half of a ham and a peck of potatoes. What on earth are we to do with all these things? I am not going to have either a frying-pan, or a kettle, strapped to my blankets."

"Oh, hang the things! leave them where they are," he laughingly replied; "they will do for some fishing party or another."

"And the grog, too?" said I, looking up into his face.

"No, by Jove! we may as well finish one bottle now, and the rest will be easily disposed of, among the four swags," answered Carroll, seizing one of the bottles of brandy, and knocking the neck off with his clasp-knife. "The rest of the things may remain where they are; I am off for Melbourne."

A pannikin of spirits and water a-piece having been handed round, all prepared to arrange their kits; not one man of the party knowing where he would lay his head that night.

Upon Edward asking me to accompany him and his brother to Melbourne, I declined; telling him that I should go to Canvas Town, and put up for a day or two at Jenkins's lodging tent.

As the road to the city passed the town of tents, we all started together; and at the turning to Prince's Bridge my three friends left me, and I made my way to the moveable residence of Mr. Jenkins. The following morning I walked to Prahran, a large and flourishing township, about two miles distant. In the course of my peregrinations, through the numerous half-finished and

dusty streets, my eyes were attracted by a large printed paper, offering fourteen shillings a-day for hands as brickmakers. "Well," said I to myself, while gazing upon the attractive paper, "I have, it is true, never tried my hand at that work, but there is no reason why I should fail, for I remember frequently to have seen women making bricks in England: I'll try it." Making sure of the address, I started to the residence of one Mr. Theophilus Bonham, who resided on the road to St. Kilda. It was some time before I found his house; but my mind was occupied in thinking what sort of a fellow he would turn out to be: the name promised well, I thought; Theophilus meaning a lover of God, and Bonham, although an English name, with slight alteration might become *bon homme*. Having made up my mind that my future master was to be a good fellow, I rapped with my stick at the door of a very respectable-looking tenement. The owner of the house opened the door to me; and upon his inquiring my object I told him that I had seen the bill, stating that he required hands for

brickmaking; he at once told me to come to his field on the following morning at six o'clock, and that he would put me on: he said that he was very busy; but spoke in so kindly a manner that he much ingratiated himself with me at first sight. Mr. Theophilus Bonham was a man of sixty-five years of age; good-looking, and stout; and I parted from him, having formed a good opinion of him, although short had been the interview. I immediately returned to Canvas Town, congratulating myself that I had succeeded in getting nice easy work, as women even in England were employed at it, never dreaming of the troubles that I was on the eve of. Rising in the morning at four o'clock, having taken the precaution to pack up some meat and a bottle of cold tea, I started to my work: in the brick-field, I found a good many hands loitering about; time for commencing their labours not having arrived.

At six o'clock, true to his time, Mr. Bonham was amongst us; he appeared to recognize me immediately, and put several leading questions to me, which proved to him that I knew no

more of brickmaking than of the manufacture of bonnets.

"You'll soon learn," said he; "you must first be a puddler, and I dare say in a day or two, you will be able to join the moulders. My foreman will take you to the place, and give you a few hints."

Calling his head man, he desired him to go with me to the puddling-pit, telling him, at the same time, that I was a new hand. I thought the words, puddling-pit, sounded ominous of dirty work; and dirty work, with a vengeance, it proved to be. The foreman was a good sort of a fellow, and took great pains in instructing me how, when I had dug out the clay, to make it into a consistency, ready for the moulder's hands. The pit was about twelve feet deep, and a plank, in width about a foot, conducted the puddler to the elevated ground: upon that plank I was expected to wheel all the clay to the moulders.

Taking off my blue jumper, and turning the sleeves of my shirt above my elbows, I commenced digging out the hard clay, the foreman

looking on all the while. After a short time I was informed that I had done enough for a while, and that I must puddle it: my instructor then seized a large pole, and began to break it; after which, bucket after bucket of water was thrown upon the earth, and then the foreman commenced hammering away at the mass, in a form which plainly told me that brick-making was not the easy task I had believed it to be.

"Now, mate," said he, addressing me, "that's easy work enough; all you have to do now is to wheel a barrowful up to the moulders."

Taking the spade in my hand, I soon filled the barrow, and commenced wheeling the stuff up the plank. Oh, how the hand-carriage wabbled about from side to side as I pushed my greasy burden up the inclined plane! and with every oscillation, away went a large piece of the sticky commodity I had manufactured. With the greatest difficulty I succeeded in gaining the top, when, taking breath, I wheeled what remained of my load to the moulders. The first thing that disgusted me was being told that I

had not brought half enough, and to get back quick and bring another, for that I ought to produce from eight to ten loads an hour. Away I returned in a most workmanlike manner, trundling the barrow after me; although I had sundry misgivings as to descending the greasy plank. Nor were my fears groundless, for the board was rendered so greasy by the quantity of clay I had dropped, that I could hardly keep my feet; and being unaccustomed to wheeling a barrow, I expected every moment that it would go over one side or the other; but I reached the bottom in safety. To my great relief, the foreman had gone when I reached the pit; and, although ideas did enter my head that I should not succeed in the honest labour I had undertaken. I re-filled my barrow and again commenced the ascent. If the first attempt was bad, the second was worse; more clay was spilled, and decidedly the barrow wabbled more than before. As fast as I got up five or six feet, so fast did I come down again; and it was not until I had made a dozen trials, every one of which compelled me to replenish the

load, that I succeeded in gaining the top. With a heart beating from over-exertion, I deposited my already hated burden, when I was told that I was not half quick enough in my movements; and at the same time, I fancied I heard one of the gang say, *sotto voce*, that I was a "loafer."

Not being anxious to get into another fight, I took no notice of the insult, and returned to my allotted work, wishing heartily that twelve o'clock would come, when we should knock off for dinner. Again my barrow was filled, and again the same troubles awaited me, but I succeeded at last in handing over an excellent load to the brickmakers. Away I trudged, endeavouring to believe that I should succeed at last in my attempt to become a maker of bricks. When I came to the dreaded plank, the foreman being no longer an eye-witness of my doings, I thought I would make my descent safe by pushing the barrow before me, instead of trundling it behind me, and commenced the downward movement. The plank was as smooth as glass, and I had reached nearly half way down, when my feet slipped from under me, and I fell,

barrow and all, into the little reservoir that contained the filthy water with which the clay was wetted. Luckily for me, I fell face foremost into the mire, for the barrow tumbled upon my shoulders, giving me at the same time, a violent blow on the back of the head.

With an emphatic exclamation, I released myself from the wretched position in which my usual good luck or my carelessness had placed me, and with a solemn affirmation that I would not learn the trade of brick-making, I commenced to scrape my face and beard. Never was man in a more piteous position; no clean water at hand in which to wash myself, and my home—if the tent where I lodged might be called by such an endearing title—distant upwards of two miles. What to do I knew not: I had thoughts of washing my face with the contents of my tea-bottle, but being thirsty I preferred suffering the filthy mire to cake upon my face. I must have been, indeed, a wretched object to look at when the foreman came down to inquire what were the reasons for my delay in bringing up the clay to the moulders. All that the kind-hearted fellow

did was to laugh: he tried to comfort me by saying that all who began to learn the art of brick-making suffered in the same way at starting. I did not hesitate to tell him that I could not and would not do it, and that I should "knock off" then and there.

"Very well, mate," said he, "I don't want to press you; I guess you are one of those London chaps that can't get a berth at a bank or a shop in Melbourne: there are hundreds like you. Poor devils! how I pity them, with their dirty white shirts, and cleaner hands. Well, well, don't say anything about it, but I'll pay you for your day's work, and you may go; you had better start at once, for they'll soon be going to dinner. There, my man, there's your fourteen shillings (drawing the silver from a huge leathern bag); you had better go now—you had better go now."

It was with a feeling of gratitude that I stretched out my hand to receive the money, knowing full well that I had not earned it; at the moment feeling rather sceptical as to the legality of the foreman paying away his

master's money in so summary a manner. However, I took it, and, acting up to his advice, quitted the puddling pit at once.

The first thing was to seek some public-house where there was a stable, trusting to find some kind horse-keeper or another who would allow me to wash my face in a bucket; as to asking for a bed-room, that would have been utterly useless in those days of barbarism. I was not long in discovering that which I so much needed, and asking the ostler to accompany me to the bar of the inn, I gave him a glass of brandy, with which he seemed perfectly satisfied, and I started for Canvas Town.

In the afternoon of that day, Carroll called upon me; he told me that he had taken up his quarters at Collingwood, and wished to know my movements. I at once told him of my lamentable failure as a brickmaker: he laughed heartily at my tale of mishap, and was desirous of knowing the craft that I would next try my hand at.

"I hardly know," said I; "but do something I certainly must, for I shall have no money for

the next two months, and I believe you to be in about the same fix: I have myself a great notion of either getting a stock-keeper's berth or turning shepherd. Now, Carroll, what are you and Dick going to do?"

"Do you think it possible, old fellow," answered Edward, "that we could get places so that we might be together?"

"I think not," I replied; "but if you are bold enough to try your fortune in Van Diemen's Land, I am your man. There is a free passage and rations from hence to Hobart Town every fortnight for those who choose to put their names down for any trade or servitude; what say you to our going? I will enter as groom; what will you undertake to do? It will be great fun in after years to talk over our little vicissitudes in the Antipodes. There is no disgrace in it, as you are well aware: our superiors are driving water-carts, and doing well at eight shillings the barrel of one hundred and twenty gallons. Hurrah! I say, for honest labour. Just think how jolly it will be to return in three months' time with our pockets full of money, and to find our duplicates awaiting

us at the Union Bank. Will you go? Say you will, and I will accompany you to the office in Flinders Street."

"By Jove! Stretton, I will go with you; it will be famous fun for three months; I will enter as in-door servant; I can do that well; I know everything that a gentleman requires, but—I should not like to put on livery."

"Livery be hanged! My dear fellow, you will look stunning in livery, and the chances are, that one of the daughters, if there be any, will be smitten with the charms of the handsome 'Jeames.' Come along: we will go at once to the office, and at least hear all about the advantages to be derived from the trip to Van Diemen's Land."

"Come, then," said Carroll, "I am your man; it is but for three months, and I should like to see the country."

Away we started, and no two men could have been merrier than we were, as we hurriedly made our way to the Emigration-office. Unlike most offices of that description, we were not detained five minutes; our tickets were

given to us; one in the name of George Thomas, the other in that of Henry Morton, the latter name being my *alias*; and at the same time we were ordered to be on board the "Ellen Jane" on the following Saturday, which gave Carroll and myself four clear days to make preparations.

I was delighted to see Edward so pleased with our projected trip, and it was not until I asked him about his brother, that I could see there was anything to mar the *pleasure* that he anticipated. I at once begged him to ask Richard to accompany us; he said that he would do so, and see me in the morning. We then parted, he taking his way to Collingwood, I returning to Canvas Town.

That night as I lay musing, one of nine of the occupants of the canvas chamber, how vividly did each event of my past life appear! how many scenes of miscalled happiness did my memory conjure up! how forcibly did each act of folly come home to me! how life-like did the forms of all those that I had loved and had lost appear before me! "Yet," said I to myself, "none are all evil; and my heart tells me

that the world cannot eradicate altogether the latent affectionate disposition which was once so apparent." At last, half suffocated with the fumes of tobacco, I fell asleep, and did not awake until the sun was high.

Edward Carroll was with me before eleven o'clock; and upon my asking him whether he had succeeded in getting his brother to accompany us, he said that he had not. He begged me to go into Melbourne with him, which I was most willing to do, as there were a few little necessaries that I required before I went on board the "Ellen Jane."

It was the month of December, the midsummer of the Antipodes. How we joked, as we walked along, about passing our Christmas in Van Diemen's Land!

"Yes," said he, "but it will be high life below stairs with us, I guess."

"Never mind," I replied, "it is but for three months, and I would not lose the trip for anything; my mind is made up, and go (D.V.) I will."

In the course of conversation I found out

that Richard Carroll intended again going to the diggings, and thus his refusal to accompany us was accounted for.

Our little purchases were made that day, and before night we were ready to embark at a moment's notice.

CHAPTER II.

The "Ellen Jane."—Our Supper on board the "Ellen Jane."—Our Fellow-passengers.—Wretched Accommodation.—Dine at Sandridge.—Left behind by the "Ellen Jane."—Destitution.—A Pawnbroker.—Pawn my Ring.—Obtain Employment as a Shepherd.—Camp out near Pentridge.—Town of Tents.—Pretty Sally's Hill.—Suffering from Thirst.—Unexpected Relief.—Hospitality of some Timber-fellers.—Interview with Mr. Patrick Maloney.—Necessity for Alcohol.—Dangerous Situation.—Danger of Drowning.—Stop with the Timber-fellers.

THE eventful Saturday arrived, and each carrying on his back all that he could call his own, we went on board the "Ellen Jane." At three o'clock in the afternoon the emigration officer came on board, and one after another had to make his appearance in the cabin, again to be warned that he was tied to servitude for three months. Accommodation and rations were found for the emigrants for a fortnight on landing at Hobart Town, in order that no one might find himself houseless in a new country; fourteen days being considered ample time in which to find work, where servants were so much required.

The "Ellen Jane" was a brig of about one hundred and twenty tons; and to my dying day shall I remember the first and only night that I passed on board of her. There were nineteen passengers, exclusive of Carroll and myself, most of whom appeared to be Irish, and out of that number seven were females. The fore-cabin, which was given up to us, was really roomy; but I am bound to state that the emigration officers were guilty of great neglect, in not making some difference between the sexes, for we had not even a sail allowed us with which we might make a partition.

"Oh! is not this delicious?" said Edward, as a huge caldron, containing at least ten gallons, was let down from above by a chain and hook, accompanied by a hoarse voice exclaiming, 'Below there!—supper.' "Is not this, Charley, worth anything? Get out your tin plate and pannikin, for, by the powers, these hungry folks will leave us but little."

Rushing to my blankets, I seized my plate and pannikin, and sat myself down on the ground by the side of the immense utensil,

which contained soup with large pieces of beef in it. Every one did the same; some had forks, with which they plunged down their hands in search of the meat; others dipped their pannikins in the savoury mess, careless how much of the greasy liquid fell upon his or her neighbour's head. In spite of all the pushing and the noise, Edward Carroll and I had an excellent supper: we were both in unusually high spirits, and the scene to which we that night were witnesses, gave a zest, which the most piquant of sauces never could have done.

The pot was not long deprived of its contents, when the same guttural voice bawled out, "Heads below!" when descended the same chain and hooks, which we were requested to affix to the caldron, which done, the vast pot ascended to its proper place in the galley.

No sooner had the great iron tureen vanished than every male produced his pipe: smoke, we were also compelled to do in self-defence, and those who had grog did not stint themselves. Although the skylight had been removed to give us as much air as possible, for the heat was

intense, we could scarcely see across the cabin for the smoke; at last, so unbearable was it, that Edward and I went on deck, determining to sleep there.

On asking what was the hour that lights were expected to be extinguished, I was told eleven; and I was further informed, upon my stating our intention of sleeping on deck, that we should not be allowed to do so. Finding ourselves thwarted in our wishes, we deemed it advisable to go below again and secure a corner of the cabin if possible, on which to spread our blankets. It was lucky that we did so.

Upon descending, we found many preparing for their night's rest, more especially the ladies (?). Oh, Maradan Carson! Oh, Girardot! could you but have seen the toilettes that were exposed to our uninitiated eyes that night, you would indeed have been astonished!

Not one particle of shame did those wretched creatures appear to have; and, stripped of their miserable attire, they huddled together in a corner, irrespective of age or sex, to sleep away the few hours that intervened before daybreak,

the time specified for the steam tug to be in attendance to tow us down the river.

Carroll and I threw ourselves down upon the hard boards and endeavoured to find some little repose, but it was denied to us. The black hole of Calcutta could scarcely have been more intolerable; twenty-one persons being stowed in the fore-cabin of a ship whose register was only one hundred and twenty tons! Shortly after daybreak the steamer arrived and quickly took us in tow, and in two hours afterwards we cast anchor in the bay, not four hundred yards distant from the spot where we had encamped during our unsuccessful fishing attempt. A more lovely day never was seen; there was not a cloud in the heavens, neither was there a breath of wind; and we were told that we were to lie where we were until five o'clock that afternoon, when it was expected that the sea-breeze would set in. Finding that the captain was going ashore (we were not one hundred yards from the land), I asked permission that Edward and I might accompany him. This was granted, but we were strictly enjoined to be on

board again by three o'clock in the afternoon. The boat landed us close to our old encampment, which we visited, but no other vestiges of our visit to that spot did we see than some empty bottles and the ashes of our fires: our pots and pans had fallen into other hands.

As I have stated, the distance from our old camp to Sandridge was a little over two miles, and thither Edward and I bent our steps. It was about nine o'clock when we reached that *now* very busy place, and as Edward appeared to know a good many people in the township the time flew rapidly by.

At one o'clock we dined at one of the numerous ordinaries that were to be found at Sandridge, preferring to make sure of a tolerably good repast on shore to joining the party round the caldron on board the "Ellen Jane." No sooner was dinner over than I warned Carroll of the necessity of our getting on board as soon as possible. It was high water at the time, and therefore we were compelled to make our way through the scrub to the vessel. It was fearfully hot, although a nice gentle breeze had sprung up

during our stay on land, and what with our exertion in making our way through the bush, we arrived at the water-side in a state of profuse perspiration. What was our dismay on breaking through the tea trees, which grew down to the water's edge, to find that the "Ellen Jane" had sailed! I can only judge how I looked on the occasion by the countenance of my friend. There we stood, regarding one another for at least three minutes; not a word was spoken by either during that time; when at last Edward said, "By heavens! we are indeed now done." Making him no answer, I flung myself down on the ground and began to fill my pipe.

"You take it deuced easy, I think," said he: "do you forget that everything that we possessed in this accursed country was on board that no less accursed vessel? What on earth are we to do? We have nothing in the world but what we stand up in."

"I am not taking it so easy, Carroll, as you think," I replied; "my mind was dwelling on our idiotism in having remained to dine on shore: if we had not done so, and had been in the open

air, the little sense that we do possess would have told us that what wind there was, was fair for Hobart Town. You are right when you say that we are done: I know not what you may have at Collingwood, but I—I have nothing in the world left but this gold signet ring," holding up my left hand. "I can only say, may God protect us! It is true our property was not very valuable, but I have lost my revolver, which I prized much, for it was given me by my brother, whom I greatly love. However, let us return at once to Sandridge, and learn at what hour the 'Ellen Jane' passed. It cannot now be past the time that we were ordered to be on board, and no signs of the 'Ellen Jane' are there between this and Gilliebrandt's Point."

"Give me a light, old fellow," said Carroll, in a voice very different to that in which I was accustomed to hear him speak, he having been filling his pipe whilst I was speaking; "there is no use in our grumbling; let us go back to Sandridge. Confound that captain, say I."

Jumping up from the ground, I plunged my

pocket-handkerchief into the water, endeavouring to cool my heated temples, and then turned to follow Carroll, who had already started for the township. Very little was said by either on our return walk; I could see that my friend was greatly annoyed, and I was vexed beyond measure. At Sandridge we heard that the "Ellen Jane" had passed at half-past two o'clock with all sail set, having a fair wind.

There is certainly an elasticity in the air of those regions of which I am writing which is not to be found in our own country; for before nightfall Edward and I talked over our dilemma with the greatest composure, if not with a degree of merriment by no means consistent with our position.

That night we slept at Canvas Town, but before we went to our beds I had made up my mind what to do.

At sunrise I sprang from my humble couch, and calling Carroll, who was sleeping as soundly as if under his own mother's roof, we dressed ourselves rapidly, and sauntered out into the open air. How deliciously fresh was the element

that we then breathed! how great was the contrast of the pure air of heaven to the heated atmosphere that we had been breathing!

"Edward," I said, "what do you think of doing? of course you will seek out Dick, and accompany him to the diggings? as for myself, I intend going to a registry office, and taking a shepherd's berth. We cannot starve; and you know that we shall not receive any money from England for many weeks. Look here, Carroll, I will go and sell this ring: I am sorry to part with it, for I have had it for many years. It will, however, procure us absolute necessaries, and determined I am not to remain another day in the neighbourhood of Melbourne. We will have some breakfast, and then go into the city."

"What is the use of my going to the diggings?" replied Carroll; "I have told you that I have no money, neither has my brother: the party that he goes up with pay for him; he is to repay them eventually. No, Charley, I will go with you; perhaps I might succeed in getting a stock-rider's berth, or that of hut-keeper: anyhow, I will accompany you to Melbourne;

Flinder's Lane is the point to which we must steer."

"Agreed, Carroll; we will have a morsel of breakfast, and once again will we try the blind goddess; surely her fickle ladyship will ere long bestow some little luck upon us two unfortunates."

Saying this, I succeeded in bringing my friend back to Jenkins's tent, although somewhat against his will; and certainly Edward was not the same man in the morning that he was overnight; his jollity had gone.

A few minutes was sufficient to discuss our wretched breakfast, for which we each paid down two shillings, when, in really light marching order—having nothing with us—we started at a brisk pace for Melbourne.

In Great Bourke Street, one of the principal streets of the metropolis of Victoria, lived a pawnbroker. If ever a sharp dealer breathed on this beautiful earth of ours, he whose name I cannot now remember, was the man. His countenance was indeed the index of his mind; and suffering from some disease in the eyes, by

which the lachrymal tubes were affected, he had had false ducts inserted, which gave the man the most disgusting appearance.

This man gave me fifteen shillings for my ring, which cost seven guineas, telling me, at the same time, that he did it as a favour! But why should I find fault, when within six months from that time, I saw him give six shillings for a ten-pound edition of "Froissart's Chronicles!" and this to a man of really large fortune, and who, had he waited for three more days, was in receipt of eight thousand pounds.

After the receipt of the fifteen shillings, our united resources amounted to two pounds twelve shillings. Making our way to an outfitting establishment we each purchased a double blanket, a quart pot, a pound of tobacco, and a pannikin These homely necessaries, however, materially reduced our little principal, and not wishing to lose the object most in view—a situation,—we went to the registry office.

The public room was crammed with those anxious for employment, but I was fortunate enough to be soon disposed of.

"I want a shepherd's berth," said I, elbowing my way through the crowd: "have you got one on your list?"

"Yes, plenty," was the reply, at the same time demanding a fee of half a crown, which I immediately paid down.

"Where are they?" said I; "read them out, and let me choose."

Turning over some of the leaves of his large book, he commenced reading over the names of the different squatters (the aristocracy) and farmers who were in want of shepherds, when he came to the name of Major Blois of Grantly, near Kilmore.

"Hold hard, mate!" I exclaimed; "what does he give?"

"Forty pounds a year, ten pounds of meat, three-quarters of a pound of tea, and two pounds of sugar per week; will that suit your book?"

"Yes; that will do: write down the address, and give us a hint how to get there," I replied.

I shall not attempt to describe the route indicated for me to pursue, and which was to

bring me to the residence of Major Blois; all that I could remember was, "Pretty Sally's Hill," where I should find a refreshment tent, and where every information would be given me.

"Have you got a hut-keeper's berth on your books?" cried Carroll from the centre of the crowd.

"Yes, lots of them," answered the disposer of situations.

"Does Major Blois want one?" continued Carroll.

"No," replied the man, looking as grand as a Government official.

"Now what do you want, mate?" said the registrar, turning round and addressing a man, the beau-idéal of a bullock-driver, and who had forced his way up to the desk.

"Stock-riding," were the only words the man uttered, and in two minutes he was content.

Demanding my vouchers to prove that I was legally hired, by which I could claim thirty shillings as travelling expenses, I left the office.

On my asking Edward his reasons for ceasing

to make any further application for a situation, on his hearing of Major Blois not requiring a hut-keeper, he told me that he would not take any situation unless it was under the same master as myself. I tried to reason with him, telling him how impossible it was that such should be the case; but no, he refused to take any employment at that time. With an inexpressible weight removed from my mind I walked up to Collingwood with my friend, to seek his brother.

I requested Edward to keep as secret my having entered on a shepherd's life.

"By Jove! Stretton," said he, "to think that you are now by law a servant; tied down to serve for three months, perhaps a brute, and without any redress! I never could do it; and it strikes me that you will kick before your time is out, and bolt."

"Never, Edward; I will do my best: I do not fear falling into the hands of a brute, for I have a gentleman in my master. Did you not see how I stopped that registrar fellow when the name of Major Blois was mentioned? No,

no; you shall hear from me when I arrive at my destination, if paper is to be had; and do not forget to think of your old friend Henry Morton; remember what Byron says—

> "Endure and shrink not: we of nobler clay
> May temper it to bear; it is but for a day."

"That is all very fine, Charley," he went on, "but you will never stick to it, I know you too well; there will be a jolly row in a week, and I shall see you back again with the name of Henry Morton figuring in the papers as an absconder. Now let us get on and find Dick; we will go part of the way with you—at least I will; his movements are perhaps not now his own."

Thanking Edward for the kindly feeling he expressed for me, and his offer of accompanying me part of the way, we hurried our steps towards Collingwood. We were not long in finding Richard Carroll: he laughed heartily at our misfortunes, thought nothing of the loss of our kits, and actually jumped with delight when I told him that I had hired myself as a shepherd. Neither were we long in inducing Dick to accompany us; that light-hearted fellow

cared not where he went, or what he did; and when I told him that there were Government works being carried out on a large scale near Kilmore, he vowed he would go there and try his hand at something.

In the evening we started, intending to camp out a mile beyond Pentridge, where there is a great stockade, the head-quarters of the Penal Department. The weather was delightful, and by eight o'clock we had reached the spot where we designed to pass the night. We had purchased, as we passed through Pentridge, a quarter of mutton and some tea and sugar; and "Little Dick," as he was called, looked the happiest of mortals as he threw down his burden (for he had carried the meat) by the river side.

I have invariably chosen very pretty sites for my camping grounds; and nothing could be more beautiful than the spot which we that evening selected. The ground, which was covered with the most beautiful mossy turf, sloped down to the water's edge, which was overhung by acacia trees, then in full bearing, and which gave forth the most delicious perfume. Fuel

was abundant, and little trouble had we to make our fire. The water in our quart pots was soon boiling, and each cutting off his chop toasted it before the fire. This time the salt was not forgotten and we made a hearty meal. At ten o'clock the fire was replenished, when we rolled ourselves in our blankets and were soon asleep.

Before sunrise on the following morning I was astir, leaving the two brothers to have their sleep out. I collected more fuel, made up the fire, stripped myself, and jumped into the river. As I dressed myself—by no means a laborious undertaking—I never felt in better health, and determined (D. V.) to do my thirty miles that day, so as to reach Major Blois's residence the day following.

The sun was well up when I awoke the brothers, who were much pleased to find that everything was ready for breakfast. Finding that I had been bathing, they did the same; and thus our breakfast was not over until eight o'clock.

Refreshed and strengthened by our bath and

a good breakfast, we commenced our walk at a rapid pace, and by one o'clock in the day we had accomplished about seventeen miles, when we stopped, finding ourselves approaching a town of tents, which indeed were the Government works we had heard of. Carroll and his brother agreed at once to inquire into the nature of the labour, and if they thought that it was in their power to undertake it, to accept employment.

Hundreds of parties were dotted about the earth-works, for it was road-making that all were employed at. To one of these we went; we found them eating their dinner; they were very civil, offered us a share of their mess, and did not hesitate to tell us all about the nature of their labour. The men told us that the work was easy enough, that Government found fuel, water, and tent, and that the wages were twelve shillings a day. Carroll and his brother at once made up their minds to remain where they were, as we were informed that the "ganger" (overseer) would be round at two o'clock. Desirous of knowing whether my two young friends com-

menced work or not, I remained with them until half-past two, when no ganger having come, I bade them farewell. I felt much in parting from Edward and his brother, and it was with a sorrowful heart that, alone, I recommenced my journey.

I had done twenty-five miles, it was said, on calling at an inn on the road-side, where I had been told by the road-makers every information could be got as to the nearest route for Pretty Sally's Hill, when I met a respectably-dressed man, who, in the course of conversation, told me that he knew Major Blois and his son, both of whom he lauded extremely. He offered me something to drink, which I accepted, for my finances were very low, and beer was sixpence a glass. He also directed me, as clearly as it was possible to do so, on my way, although he warned me that the track would be found most intricate when I got on the ranges.

"Take my advice, my man, and go no further than the refreshment tent upon the hill, or you will have to sleep out," said he, in a kindly manner.

"I care not for sleeping out," I replied, "I am accustomed to it; and such weather as this, I prefer the air of the oven, to sleeping in a room with perhaps a dozen others."

Upon that we parted, he for Melbourne on horseback, I on foot for Pretty Sally's Hill. Striking directly off the road, I for some time made my way very easily, but each half-mile made a wonderful difference in the clearness of the track. Still I passed on, conscious that I should soon be among the wooded ranges, but trusting to meet with some one who would point out my route. For two or three hours I made my way over those thickly-wooded ranges; one range immediately succeeding another. Dying with thirst, I sat myself down, and listened attentively: not a sound was there to relieve the monotonous silence of that moment; not even did the screech of my old enemy, the laughing jackass, reach my ear. Determined, if possible, to force my way out of the bush before darkness came on, I rose from the ground and recommenced my walk. I had completed about another mile, when to my de-

light the country became more open: still there was no sign of water. Pursuing the same course for about another half-mile, I accidentally came upon a beaten track; yes, and a track along which a bullock dray had passed that very day. With a feeling of gratitude I thanked God; and yet, how slight were those sufferings to what I had eventually to bear. First making sure which way the bullocks' heads were turned, whether up or down the hill, I started as fast as my wearied limbs would carry me; and, to my great delight, in a quarter of an hour's time the sound of the axe fell upon my ear. "I am safe," said I to myself; "in a few minutes I shall have some water."

I had not walked three hundred yards when a bend in the track brought me in sight of a tent; a large fire was burning near it, upon which I saw a woman place a kettle. Hastening my steps I made up to her, and begged that she would give me a pannikin of water. My request was acceded to, and at the same time she asked me to remain, as her husband and his mate would be back immediately to their supper.

Thanking her, I told her that I would do so, and sat down outside the tent. I was very much struck by the apparent neatness and comfort of the kind woman's habitation, and it was evident, by the way in which she catered for her husband and his mate, that she was a good wife.

In less than ten minutes the two men made their appearance; nothing was considered as unusual in my taking advantage of any comfort that their tent might give, and both men saluted me cordially. I had an excellent supper; spirits and water were afterwards offered to me, which I accepted, and before all the questions which were put to me were answered, darkness had come on. I had told them, without any reserve, that I was on my way to Major Blois's residence, having become one of his shepherds. I had confessed also my thorough want of knowledge of the art of tending sheep, but trusted soon to surmount all difficulties.

"You had better stay with us, mate," said the owner of the wife and the tent. "I am foreman here, and I will give you a billet; you will

make more money with us than you will by shepherding. You shall have easy work of it, and the master comes to look at us only once a week, and that's on Saturday, when he brings our tobacco and some rum; he's a good sort of chap, and has lots of money; all this bullock run is his. Will you stop with us? Fred, there, has got a tent hard by—he'll give you room; won't you, Fred?"

"With all my heart," said a great fellow of fifty years. "Such as it is, he's welcome. Ay! I see you have got your blankets; you're all right."

I thanked the honest fellows for their kind offer, but I told them that I was in duty bound to go to Grantly, and that Major Blois would be sure to hear in a day or two from the registrar, stating that he had sent him a shepherd.

"Not a bit of it," said the married man. "Did they pay your travelling expenses, which they are bound to do?"

"No," I replied, "but I am to receive that on my arrival at Blois's residence."

"You are no servant of Blois's," he continued;

"stay where you are; you can eat with us; my old woman will do for you as well as for us; and I will give you an easy billet."

Upon asking what was the work on which they were employed, they told me that they were felling timber to build a new house for the master; that my wages would be eight shillings a day with rations, and that the work I should have to do would be literally nothing. In a moment of thoughtlessness I accepted the offer, yet not without some slight feeling of regret in throwing up my shepherd's berth.

That night I slept in the big man's tent, which was so small that I had to bend myself nearly double to make an entrance; but my blankets were soon spread and I slept soundly.

At sunrise we rose and had breakfast, when Nicholas put me to my work, which was to lop off the branches of trees which had the previous day been felled. Easy, indeed, was my labour, and I began to think that I was quite right in throwing Blois over.

It was on the Wednesday morning that I

commenced work for Mr. Patrick Maloney, and the four days that intervened before the day of rest, were passed agreeably enough. Nicholas had warned me that the master, as he called him, would be with us on Saturday evening, when he invariably brought some tobacco and rum; the rations were sent every other day, on accountof the heat of the weather.

On Saturday, about five o'clock, as I was chopping away at the branches of a small fallen tree, Nicholas ran up to me and said, "Harry, come quick; here's the master coming on his horse; get to work at the tree we have been at; we'll go to another; he'll think it is all your doing. Go in at it like mad; let your axe speak: we shall knock off directly he comes. Go at it;" and away he ran.

Tucking my shirt-sleeves nearly up to my shoulders I belaboured away at a huge stringy bark tree which was nearly ready to come down, when Mr. Patrick Maloney rode up to the tent. Calling Nicholas he made inquiries as to the work done, which I believe was considered to be very satisfactory. Finding the master in a

good humour he told him that he had taken on another hand. Mr. Maloney expressing a wish to see the new man, Nicholas brought him up to where I was; and I am satisfied that he went away with the idea that he had got a bargain in me. It is true that for about fifteen minutes I worked as I had never worked before, and as I never will again: every blow with that axe jarred my whole system; the wood was as hard as iron, and the heat overpowering.

"That will do for to-night," said Maloney; "come to the tent, and I will give you some grog. You may knock off now—it's just six o'clock."

I was not long in obeying the master's orders; and pulling my shirt-sleeves down I followed the pair. Mr. Maloney was rather a good-looking man; but in a moment you could see that he had sprung from the lowest class of Irishmen. He was wealthy, and he was ridiculously arrogant: it was with difficulty that I refrained from laughing outright, as he handed me a pannikin half full of raw rum which I filled up to the brim with water. He wore a scarlet jumper,

and had on a pair of new patent-leather thigh boots, which he from time to time lashed with the thong of his stock whip. It was with great pleasure that I saw him jump on his horse and ride away: nevertheless he left us some spirits and tobacco, which in that country are always acceptable.

The reader will doubtless consider that the writer was remarkably fond of spirits and water, so many allusions being made to it; but he must remember, at the same time, that I was in a country notoriously badly off for that most essential element in summer, and generally speaking of so bad a quality that you were compelled to boil it before using it, or to destroy the animalculæ with which it was infested by pouring a tolerably large quantum of alcohol into it.

The following morning, although a day of rest, I rose early and sauntered down to the little creek, then dried up, with the exception of here and there a large deep hole, in hopes of finding a spot where I could have a bath; and about a mile from our tent I was fortunate

enough to discover what I considered a very nice place; the bottom of the creek was of a very rocky nature, and always dry in summer, with the exception of these large holes. The diameter of the hole I had selected in which to enjoy myself was about eight feet; the banks were about two feet high and perpendicular, and so even that one might almost have fancied it was an artificial well. The only articles of the toilette that I had brought with me were a small comb, a towel, and a tooth-brush; a pannikin was my constant companion. Having undressed, I cautiously let myself down into the water, making sure that it would not be above five feet in depth: but no sooner had my hands been withdrawn from the bank than down I went like a shot, my head receiving a violent blow at the back.

How far I went down the treacherous hole I know not: bewildered by the blow, and so astonished at finding no bottom, it is a wonder to me how I ever came up at all. With the greatest difficulty I managed to get firm hold of the top of the bank, but no purchase could be found

for my foot wherewith to scramble out. Round and round I went the whole circle of the hole, but no place could I find; the sides were worn as smooth as glass, caused by the action of the water during the floods in the winter months. I was frightened, for my strength was fast giving way. I called out for help, but no one was near enough to hear my voice. I tried the Koo-ee-je, but no answering cry came to cheer me up. Rendered desperate from fear, I then made one last effort, and succeeded in climbing on the bank at the expense of a broken nose. Exhausted, I lay upon the ground; my nose bled profusely, and the back of my head was very sore: altogether I must have appeared a queer object had chance brought any one by at that moment. In less than half an hour, I was on my way to the tent again, my appetite having suffered nothing from the fright or from the bruises. Nicholas, his wife, and his mate, laughed heartily at my morning's distresses, and wondered that I should have chosen the Devil's Punch-bowl for my bath, when there were many far better holes higher up the creek.

"Well, Morton," said Nicholas, as we sat smoking our pipes after breakfast; "how do you like your berth here? it is not very hard work, is it? I think you will find it a better game than shepherding; and all that you have to do is to look out for the master. You will always know when he is coming, from the noise of that infernal stock whip; and then again, he always rides, so you have plenty of time to get to work at some half-felled tree or another before he comes to you. I hope you'll stay with us, Harry, for my missus likes you, and she says that she has never seen such a nice-spoken chap, for that you always say, 'Thank ye,' for everything she does for you; and then again, Fred swears that he thinks you are a gentleman, for you carry a tooth-brush. You had better stay with us: we shall not see master again until Saturday next."

I thanked Nicholas for his kindness, and told him that I would certainly try my fortune with him, so long as all went smoothly. I did not hesitate in expressing my dislike of our employer, and considered him an ignorant, purse-proud,

and bullying brute, but that I would remain if it were possible.

The Sunday was spent by all with perfect decorum, if not religiously; and I doubt if it were possible to find two better men of their class, than Nicholas and Fred, in Victoria.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Patrick Maloney.—His ruffianism.—Kindness of Mrs. Maloney.—Bid farewell to the Timber-fellers.—Route to Pretty Sally's Hill.—Grantley Lodge.—Conversation with the Hut-keeper.—The Old Shepherd.—Become a Shepherd.—The old Shepherd a Poacher and Convict.—A Shepherd's Life.—Merry-making at the Hall.—Enrolled by Major Blois.—Become Communicative under the Influence of Good Cheer.—Inquiries as to my Previous Life.—Assist the Guests to their Horses.—Decline the Office of Cook.—Mr. Blois' Kindness.—The Old Shepherd a Murderer!

THE two next days passed over with nothing to detract from my comfort, and I began to consider myself quite a wood-cutter (for I had really begun upon hard work), when on Wednesday, to our astonishment, the master arrived, and after looking over all the work that was done, he ordered me up to his house, which was two miles distant, and told me to bring my axe and a cross-saw, for he wanted a few saplings felled. With dismay, I looked at Nicholas, who was standing near, knowing that I should make some mess or another of the work about to be imposed upon me.

"Had I not better come up, master?" said my good, kind friend.

"No," answered Patrick Maloney, "let that chap go, and mind that he brings the cross-saw with him."

Upon my assuring him that I had no idea where he resided, he called me a fool, and told me to follow the track, which went direct from our tent to his house. My blood boiled a little at the slur he had cast upon my mental capacity, but I thought it better to take no notice of anything that the man might say. Picking up the cross-saw, which, being seven feet in length, wabbled up and down every step that I took, as it rested upon my shoulder, I started, axe in hand, for the abode of Mr. Pat Maloney.

My way lay by the Devil's Punch-bowl, and I could not resist stopping for a moment to look at the spot where I so nearly met with so unromantic a death.

Maloney passed me in a hard gallop about half a mile from his own house, merely saying, as he rode by, "You're one of them lazy ones."

"That makes two I owe you, Mr Maloney,"

said I to myself, raising the axe at the same time as if I would break his head.

The master, as Nicholas called him, was waiting for me as I walked up to the door of the log hut, which was of large size. The improvements, as all buildings of wood are called, were on a tolerably large scale, and indeed everything denoted that the man was doing well.

"Come, bring your tools and follow me," were the first words he uttered, and in no amiable tone. Without making any reply, I followed him until he stopped near three large trees—when I say large trees, they were of fifty or sixty years' growth.

"Set to, and cut that fellow down," said my employer.

Placing the cross-saw gently on the ground, but still holding in my hand the axe, I surveyed the tree, and then thus addressed Mr. Patrick Maloney:—

"I thought you brought me here to fell some saplings for making railings to keep your bullocks from entering your enclosed grounds. Do you mean to call this tree a sapling? I tell

you that it will take two men more than an hour to lay it on the ground. I will not do it."

"What do you say, you d—d loafing rascal?" he bellowed out, advancing towards me in a menacing attitude; "what do you say?—that you will not obey my orders?"

"Keep off from me, Maloney," I answered, placing my foot firmly on the saw; "or by heavens I will split your head open with this axe! I will not strike a blow upon that tree. Pay me my week's wages and I am off: I will not stay with such a low blackguard as you are."

"Give me my cross-saw, you thundering thief!" he continued, and stooping at the same time as if to take it,—"you have no business with my tools."

"I tell you that I am no thief," I replied, "and that the tools are not yours, for Nicholas's name is branded on them. Now will you pay me my money?"

He stared at me with astonishment, not thinking that I had judged his character so well; he was unarmed, too, which strengthened my demand immensely.

"Follow me to the house, you swindling villain, and I'll pay you off. Take care I don't catch you about my works below there, for if I do, I'll——"

I stopped him by telling him to go on, and that I would follow him.

The bully was cowed, and without uttering another word, he turned towards the house. Having reached the door, he entered, leaving me outside. He was not many minutes away, but during that short time, I could overhear much that was said, and which was by no means in my praise. Coming out with a handful of notes, as if to show how great was the difference between us, he demanded how much were my wages. I told him that it was exactly eight days I had been with him, but that all I wanted was my week's wages.

"There," said Maloney, handing me over two pounds, sixteen shillings, "there's your money; now cut, and I'm d——d glad to get rid of you. Off you go, I tell you; I don't want such as you about my premises."

"Give us a drink of milk, Maloney, for I am

uncommon thirsty." This I said in a half-beseeching, half-laughing voice, but which only added fuel to fire.

"Give you a drop of milk! I would not give you a drop of water to save your life, you smooth-tongued villain!" This he said as he slammed to the door, and thus ended the colloquy.

Away I started, as happy as a bird, in search of new adventures. My slender resources had been wondrously replenished by my week's labour; and I was in the act of considering the reasonableness of trying Major Blois yet, as to getting a berth under him, when I came upon a little girl, who was sitting on a stump by the track side; she was a pretty little thing, and about ten years of age.

"Well, my little lassie," said I, going up to her, "do you belong to the house above?"

"Yes," she replied, "I am Mary Maloney, and mother told me to give you this," at the same time putting into my hand a bottle of milk.

"Thank you, my little lady," said I, taking her up in my arms and kissing her (the first kiss I had in Australia); "give my best thanks to

your mother, and tell her that I shall not forget her kindness."

Away the little thing ran, and, I have no doubt, to tell her father that the loafing villain had given her a kiss.

I watched the little damsel until she turned round some trees, when I lost sight of her, and then, picking up my tools, I made for the tent to recount to my friends the issue of my meeting with the master.

I found Nicholas and Fred still at work: they did not seem in the least astonished when I told them that I was discharged, although they expressed their regret at my leaving them.

They laughed much when I gave them a description of the quarrel, and how I had asked for a drink of milk after being paid. They told me that Mrs. Maloney was really a very nice and a very good woman, and that the little thing who had brought me the bottle was a favourite with everyone who knew her. I remained with the wood-cutters until they had finished their work, when I accompanied them to the tent.

Mrs. Symes appeared equally sorry, on hearing from her husband that I was going to leave, and asked me to remain the night, as the track was by no means clear, although the moon was nearly full. This I agreed to do, and to breakfast with them before I started. Long before dark we retired to our couches, and before the sun rose in the morning, I was up, and had my swag packed. Nicholas and Fred did an hour's work before breakfast, and thus I had a little confab with Mrs. Symes.

"I am packing you up some dinner, Mr. Morton," said she, turning round and looking at me, as I lay on the ground outside the tent.

"Harry, Mrs. Symes—Harry Morton is my name," I replied, jumping up; "no Misters for me; I'm plain Henry Morton, the shepherd, who will long remember the goodwill evinced towards him by yourself and husband."

"Tell me, Mr. Morton, or Henry, if you will have it so," continued Mrs. Symes, "are you not a gentleman? My husband and Fred will have it that you are not one of us like; and you do talk so nice, and you have seen so many

places, and you tell so many stories of the old country, that we all shall long remember you after you are gone."

"Do you think, Mrs. Symes," I answered, "that I look much like a gentleman in such a rig as this? Believe me, gentlemen do not travel across the country with all their worldly goods upon their backs; no, Mrs. Symes, I am no gentleman, I wish to heavens I was."

"Then I'm blessed if you ought not to be," said Nicholas, turning into the tent. "Now, missus! now, missus! let us have breakfast as soon as you can. Maybe the master will be down, and then there will be a row about Harry eating his meat."

I immediately left Nicholas's tent and went to that of Fred, seized hold of my blankets, which were already packed, returned to my friends, and said, "I'm off—may every good attend you for the kindness I have received!" The words were no sooner uttered than Nicholas caught me by the collar, and said that he would not hear of my leaving without my breakfast, and he then forced me into a seat.

Half an hour sufficed for the discussion of the first meal of the day, when I rose to depart; Mrs. Symes came forward, and gave me a paper parcel, which I was told was my dinner, and a small bottle in which was rum. Unpacking my blankets, I stowed away my provender, which done, I strapped my swag upon my shoulders and held out my hand to say good-bye. Mrs. Symes took that hand with a warmth which proved her sincerity. Then turning to Nicholas and Fred, who both bade me farewell with equal kindness of feeling, in five minutes I was out of sight.

My route for the first hour lay through a most beautiful wooded country; after that time it became more open, and I can only compare it to some of our park lands at home. I was then ascending Pretty Sally's Hill, the weather was lovely, and what with the buoyancy of my spirits, and the life of adventure I was about to enter on, I felt inexpressibly happy.

It was mid-day when I reached the refreshment tent, where I was told to inquire my route to Major Blois's residence. The proprietor was

a civil fellow, and gave me every information that I required; and after resting for an hour, I started, not knowing whether I should be received as one of the hirelings of that gentleman, or be kicked from the doors as one who had broken his engagement.

The scenery, as I approached Blois's Run, increased in beauty, and the last quarter of a mile exceeded anything that I have ever seen; the road up to the premises being cut through the bush in one straight line, of great breadth, and with gum trees of enormous size, forming an avenue as regular as if planted by the hand of man.

With a feeling of doubt I approached Grantley Lodge. There was nothing grand in the outward appearance of the "improvements;" for all that I could see was a cluster of wood huts, distant from each other about twenty-five yards; one being larger than the rest, which was the residence of Major Blois and his son.

Nature had indeed done all at Grantley, for I never saw a more lovely site for a house; and seldom have I seen worse taste than was displayed in the character of all the buildings at-

tached to that estate. But there was a reason for it: the poor old major was in difficulties, and like many others younger than himself, he had gone too fast. He however erred on the right side, for it was his boundless hospitality that had caused his property to be placed in the hands of his son; and if any father had reason to be proud of his child, Major Blois had.

Entering the first hut that I came to, I found myself in the shepherds' quarters; one man only was there at the time, and he was cooking the half of a large sheep.

"Are you hut-keeper?" said I.

"Yes, do you want something to eat?" he replied.

"No, thank ye, mate; I only wish to know if Major Blois is at home; and whether he has got a shepherd yet: I ought to have been here some days back."

"No, mate," he answered, "the old shepherd is not gone yet; and Major Blois's son is down with the shearers yonder; they'll all be back by-and-by, for supper. So you are the shepherd that was expected, are you?"

"Yes," said I; "and I hope I am not too late, for I hear good accounts of the master."

"There never was a better pair, my man, than Blois and his son," he went on: "the young one's a right one; but he's no better than the old one, only the major can't get about now, he's got so big. Will you have a drain?" holding up a bottle of spirits.

I emptied the glass of spirits, more from the desire to make friends than anything else; and leaving my swag in the hut, went towards the shearing-house. At the large bark building I found young Blois, surrounded by his men: he was in the act of putting a sheep on a settle, he himself being an excellent hand at shearing. He at once asked me if I wanted a job at that work, but telling me that I was too late, as that evening would close the clipping-season.

Without hesitation I told him that I was the shepherd who had hired himself at the registry office in Melbourne, and that circumstances over which I had no control had caused the delay in my coming.

"Well," said young Blois, "go to the hut; I

will speak to you this evening; the men will soon be going to their supper; but stop, will you have a drop?"

Upon the same principle that I accepted the drain from the hut-keeper, I took the drop from the hands of the master—to make friends.

I had not long returned to the hut when the shearers entered in a body. It was their last evening, and Blois had determined to make them happy. The men had been allowed to go into his garden and to help themselves to peas, potatoes, and cabbages—a great treat up the country; he had also given them a good allowance of grog, and in fact the poor fellows were made happy. I was happy, for every one was remarkably civil to me, more especially a silver-haired old man, whose situation I was, I thought, destined to fill.

In conversation with the old shepherd, he told me that he should go out with his flock on the morrow for the last time; and that I had better accompany him, as I might gain a little insight into part of the run.

I told him that I would do so if I could; but

that I had had no interview with Major Blois as yet, and really knew not whether I was engaged or not.

At nine o'clock a message was sent me that Blois could not see me that evening; but that I was to accompany old Floss in the morning. At four o'clock the old weather-beaten fellow was on the move; so I rose and dressed myself. The hut-keeper was also up, and had put out our breakfast; the old man (Floss) had put enough meat into a clean bag to serve for six persons instead of two, but which was intended for our dinner.

In five minutes after we had quitted the hut, we were at the camping-ground of his flock: the sheep are never penned near at home. The sheep at once began to move, and for a mile moved on at a steady pace, when they began to spread and to feed.

It was with great interest I watched Floss and his management of his charge. He had that day upwards of two thousand wethers, and it was with pleasure that I saw how easy a matter it was to tend so large a flock.

Floss was attended by two dogs, Scotch collies. The sagacity of these animals was astonishing; there was no whooping, no holloaing; the wave of the old man's hand was all that was required. Of course, the reader will say, we see that every day with our pointers and setters at home; he was, indeed, the perfection of a shepherd. At twelve o'clock the flock camped on a delicious spot of ground on the banks of the Running River, whose water is the best in the colony of Victoria; and the character of which stream resembles greatly that of some of our minor rivers in the principality of Wales; but, alas! there are no fish in it.

No sooner had the flock settled down to their three hours' siesta, than old Floss made preparations for dinner: a fire was soon made, our quart pots put on to boil, and the contents of the shepherd's wallet were strewed upon the ground. It was within two yards of that beautiful stream, that the old shepherd and myself sat down to rest ourselves until it should suit the animals to move again in quest of food.

The fern which grew on the banks of that

river was of great height, and perfectly kept the sun's rays from us. In short, the whole scene appeared to me a Paradise.

"You have not long been in the colonies, young man, have you?" said Floss.

"No," I answered. "It is only two years since I came out. Have you been long with Major Blois?" I continued, wishing to draw from him whether or no he had come out at the expense of the Government; and knowing well how great is the insult considered by the "old hands," if they were asked the length of time they had been in the colonies.

"Yes, young man, I have been eight years with the major, and many thousand sheep in that time have I reared for him. He is a good man, and so is his son; a little bit wild is the young one; but, I remember, I was just like him when I was his age. But I'm getting old now, and past service; I've got a few hundreds in the bank, however, and I shall board myself out somewhere, where they'll take care of me. I should like to see the old country again; I don't know how it——"

Here I interrupted him by asking him why he did not return to England, and I at the same time inquired of what county he was a native.

"I come from Wiltshire, shepherd: I don't know your name yet; and my name isn't Floss, it is Wellstead. They call me Floss because my hair is so white. Ay! indeed, I have seen enough in this world to turn a young man grey. Do you know Wiltshire?"

"Yes, Wellstead, I do: I have been at Devizes."

"No, have you though? then perhaps you know my cousin, Tom Belton. He was ostler at the 'Bear' when I left: every one know'd Tom; he was a good fellow, and there wasn't a man in the three shires as could come up to Tom, in dressing a horse: no, I'm blowed if there was."

"Very likely, Wellstead, I may have known him," said I, endeavouring to find out the real history of my brother shepherd; "but how long ago was it that you left Wiltshire?"

"It's just thirty-two years come January next, that I said good-by to the old country. I shall not forget the day: it was on a Wed-

nesday; it was the latter end of the month, mark ye; and a bitter cold frost covered the ground. Well, we sailed from Gravesend, and a pretty lot we was; I suppose we were nigh three hundred——"

"Emigrants?" said I, interrupting him.

"No—convicts!" he replied, fixing his small but searching eye on mine; "I tell you, shepherd, that they sent me out here: yes, they transported me for a thing that I had never done. I never killed him—I swear I never killed him: two or three guns went off at the same time, mine amongst the rest, and the man was killed; but it was not I that killed Jem Bowles."

"I believe you, Wellstead," said I, trying to gather all I could of the history of the old man: "but pray tell me the whole business; I feel much interested in you, for I cannot help thinking that you are anything but a wicked man."

"Thank ye, shepherd, for your good opinion: I will tell you all. Why should I deny it, when all about here know that I have been lagged?

It was in this way that it came about:—you say you know Devizes? (I nodded assent); then of course you know Bowood, the Marquis of Lansdowne's place? (Again I nodded.) Well; I was one of a party who were very fond of the gun; and you know there's an unaccountable bit of game about them parts. Well; one night, four or five of us thought that a few birds from the great lord's coverts would not be missed, and so we went to Bowood, and an unaccountable lot of pheasants we had got, sure knows: when all of a sudden the keepers was down upon us: we had all sworn that we would not be taken; and had made a Bible oath on it. They were six keepers in all, what with watchers: well, as I said, they nailed us in one of them great rides; (oh! ain't they real places for shooting!) Up they come like men; we stood our ground; the fowling-pieces were clubbed upon both sides, and a royal battle we had. Talk of the fight at Roundway down!—it was nothing to ours. Well; the keepers were getting the better of us, and a shot was fired; by which side I know not: all I know is, that our chaps began to fire away too,

and somehow my gun went off. I didn't kill him, shepherd; I tell you that I didn't kill Jem Bowles."

"Be quiet, Wellstead," said I, again interrupting him: "do not excite yourself. I believe you; for I feel assured that you would not kill this dog;" at the same time patting one of his sheep collies.

"Kill him! kill that dog! Why, I'd rather kill my own brother—I'm blessed if I wouldn't."

This little outbreak of Wellstead's rather diminished the very great interest that I had taken in the veteran sheep tender. We sat in silence for some time, and do all I could, I could not bring myself to enter into conversation upon the same terms as before that crowning speech: "Kill that dog! Why, I would rather kill my own brother."

The interest which had been excited so greatly in favour of Floss, the shepherd, had vanished in Wellstead, the murderer. In a very few minutes the old man was fast asleep, and as I watched him, to all appearance enjoying the sweetest repose, I thought, can I be sitting

by the side of one who has steeped his hands in blood? little dreaming that before long I should be on more intimate terms with both sexes of that class. I had ample time to ruminate whilst Wellstead slept; and I believe that the impressions then formed upon my mind have had their good effect.

"Have they moved yet?" said Floss, rising from the ground.

"No," I answered, "they are quiet enough, and whilst this heat lasts, I suppose they will remain as they are. I have seen nothing pass but a kangaroo rat, that disturbed them a little."

"All right; let us have a pannikin more tea, and a smoke, and by that time they'll be on the move. Give us that pot, yonder," said Floss.

I handed him his quart pot, and refilled my own pipe, with a feeling of regret that my first impressions as to his character were dashed to the ground; his words, "Kill that dog! I would rather kill my own brother," still rang in my ears.

At last the sheep moved off, and with that

wonderful instinct that nature has implanted in them, fed their way towards home, which they reached just as the sun set.

A shepherd's supper is the great meal of the day, and a right good one it is. We sat down five that evening, for the man who had been hired in my absence had arrived; and there was no denying that Major Blois had lost nothing by my delay: the new-comer was every inch a shepherd. I felt a little annoyed that I had lost the chance of serving the Blois's, and was rather uneasy at the thoughts of being so far from Melbourne, when in such straitened circumstances. About nine o'clock I was sent for; the bearer of the message telling me that the young master wished to see me in the dining-room.

"Oh! they are a jolly lot!" said the messenger; "they are a jolly lot! haven't they drunk a lot of wine to-day in the big house! Young Blois says that this is the best year's clip they have had for a long time. It's all square for you on the carpet to-night."

"Has Major Blois company to-night?" I asked.

"Yes, mate," he replied, "some three or four as thirsty souls as ever handled a pannikin; but you had better cut."

Without saying any more, I walked to the great house. I was obliged to pass by the dining-room in my way to the front door; the windows of that room were thrown wide open, and disclosed to my sight a large and apparently well-furnished apartment; and the numberless decanters and glasses upon the table, bespoke a night of more than usual festivity.

"Holloa!—come in here," said some one, before I had even rapped at the door.

Taking off my hat, and pushing my hair up, as is generally done by the most refined before entering a room (I hope the reader will not laugh, but such is the case in all stations of life), I opened the door and stood before the company.

"Shut the door, shepherd, and sit down," said the old major, who was as like Farren, the late actor, when in the character of Old Father Whitehead, as could possibly be.

Putting my old hat on the ground, and

seating myself as far as I possibly could from the company, I calmly awaited the trials that were before me.

"Here's a glass of brandy and water for you, shepherd," said the jolly old major.

"Thank you, sir," I replied, as I took the teeming hot comforter in my hands. "Here's to your healths, gentlemen," raising the tumbler to my lips. "May this year's clip be a good one!"

"Thank ye, shepherd; thank ye, shepherd," was the reply from all the squatters, to the not malapropos toast that I had given.

Little or no notice after that was taken of me, for at least a quarter of an hour. The squatters, who, by-the-by, had not stinted themselves in their libations, had entered upon the never-ending subject of Free-trade. I listened attentively, and with much interest to their arguments, pro and con; when at last old Blois, slapping his hand down upon the table, which made every glass jump, said—

"You may say what you like, but that man Cobden is a great and a rising man."

The words "a great humbug," unfortunately and unwittingly escaped from my lips.

"What's that, shepherd, you say?" bawled out the old squire.

"Capital! capital!" said some of the other great landed proprietors.

"Go it, shepherd," said a youngster, who, I have no doubt, had more money than brains; "go in and win; you are the last man from the old country, I'll swear."

When the hubbub, which my unfortunate remark had created, had subsided, I apologized to the major, by telling him that I had quite forgotten whose presence I was in, from the interest I had taken in their conversation; but that I trusted he would forgive my impertinence.

"No offence, shepherd; no offence," said the old man, "but tell us, why do you think Mr. Cobden a humbug, when what he has done was for the benefit of the poor?"

"I really beg your pardon, gentlemen,—I didn't mean it, I meant to say, that Mr. Cobden, in my opinion, and in the opinion of many others, thought a vast deal more of doing

something for himself than he did for the poor, when he brought his Free-trade bill before the House: but it isn't for such as I am to argue with such born gentlemen as you are; I hope no offence."

"Oh no, you have not offended any one: but tell us, where were you sent to school?" said young Blois.

"I was brought up, sir, at a school in the country: it was called a good school, but there was a power of flogging in my days there."

"And you had your share of it, shepherd, I have no doubt," continued young Blois.

"Yes, sir, I believe I had,—if not more than my share. It's all very well now and then; it certainly does act as a sort of corrective; but too much of a good thing is no good, and flogging did not succeed with me. They might have led me like a lamb, but to thrash me—oh! it was no go, that."

"How long have you been out?—by-the-by what is your name?" said the young man.

"My name, sir, is Henry Morton; and I

have been out about two years and a half," I replied.

"I presume you paid your passage out; you did not come out for your country's good, like old Floss?"

"Yes, sir; I did pay my own passage out; and whether or no my country has derived any benefit from my absence, I cannot tell; that it has suffered nothing by it, I feel confident."

My last reply brought a loud laugh from all.

It appeared, however, that young Blois wanted to know more about me; he first asked me whether I had been brought up to farming; when I told him that I had once farmed a certain number of acres, but that I had been unfortunate.

"You have never been a lawyer's clerk, have you?" he at last said, and, as I thought, rather impertinently.

"Yes, sir, but only for a short time; I did not like the business; I was too honest, and another thing, sir,—I did not like serving writs."

"You are the man for me," cried out the major, who had writs enough in his house at that

time to have papered the walls of his dining-room. "Give him another glass of brandy and water; he is an honest fellow, I know; give him another glass, Tom," speaking to his son.

Another tumbler of hot brandy and water was forced upon me, after feigning great dread of the consequences, and with it in my hand, I retired to my corner to await my fate.

The conversation became general, and it appeared to me that I was totally forgotten, for it was a long time before they offered me another glass of brandy and water. Nevertheless I had great fun in listening to the conversation; glass after glass was quaffed by the Blois's, and their friends, each glass telling, to my practised eye, upon the brains of the entire company. Songs were sung, in which I, forgetting my position, joined in chorus. Gradually had I drawn my chair nearer to the table: healths were drunk, in which I also joined, although my glass was empty.

There was hardly a subject that was entered on in which I had not something to say. The

young squatter, who was greatly excited by what he had taken, interlarded his speeches with bad Latin and worse Greek, and summed up one of his effusions with, "Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur cum illis."

"Pardon me," I said, drawing my chair still closer to the table, and helping myself to another glass of brandy and water, "you cannot make a hexameter verse of that; it is 'Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur ab illis.'"

"Hurrah!" cried old Blois; "the shepherd's got him: worry him, what's-your-name? worry him, shepherd: help yourself to another glass." I presume that he had not seen me take care of myself as I had done. Again I filled my tumbler, and I retained my position at the table for the rest of the evening.

It was near midnight when the guests rose to leave. Being ordered by young Blois to lend a hand in bringing round the horses, I ran to the kitchen; the only indoor male servant (if indoor servant he could be called, for he was footman, gardener, and groom) that was kept, was fast asleep. Shaking him, he awoke, when we went

together to the stables, and shortly afterwards the four horses were at the door.

I held two of the quadrupeds, while the other man attended to his pair. Out came the four aristocrats, as they were considered in that neighbourhood, by no means remarkable for their steadiness of gait. Holding one horse by the head, and the rein of the other hanging loosely on my arm, I pushed the young squatter's foot into the stirrups.

"Thank you, shepherd," said he; "here's something for you, my man," putting a half-crown into my hand.

Thanking him, I did the same service by the other guest, when he slipped three shillings into my palm, without saying a word. The same grateful acknowledgments were made; and my brother attendant having done the like offices to his gentlemen, they all rode off at a pace which would have astonished any one from the old country.

No sooner was the clattering of the horses' hoofs lost in the distance, than young Blois (who had come to the door to see his friends off) asked me again into the dining-room.

"Shepherd," said he, as I stood with my hat in my hand, the very personification of innocence, "I am very sorry that we cannot give you old Floss's berth. The fact is, you were so long in coming, that I have hired another shepherd; but if you will take a hut-keeper's place, you can stay with us. There is not much to do; it is merely to cook for my father, and myself, and the three shepherds. Now, will you stay? we give thirty pounds a-year, and you have a chance of pickings."

"I will be candid with you, Mr. Blois; the cooking I could do, but could not bear the heat of the fires. I am very sorry to have lost the chance of serving Major Blois; for one and all speak as to the kindness and general thoughtfulness of that gentleman towards his men." This I said, turning and looking the old major in the face.

"Give him another glass, Tom," said the jolly old master; "and if he will not take a cook's billet, why let him remain here until we can find him a place."

"I thank you, sir," said I; "I know no one

in this neighbourhood, and if you could assist me, I should feel much obliged."

"Now, look here, Morton," said young Blois; "I am going to-morrow to Kilmore, where there will be a meeting of magistrates. Shepherds are scarce, owing to the gold mania: I will do what I can for you; and have no doubt that I shall be successful in finding you employment; but take my advice, go out every day with one or the other of the shepherds; for it strikes me you are green at the work."

"I will do so, sir," I replied; "and I feel grateful for your kindness. I presume, sir, that you want me no more?" picking up my hat to move away.

"Have one more glass, my boy," said the major, "before you go; it will make you sleep. Depend upon it, my son will do his best for you."

Young Blois filled another tumbler of spirits and water, which he handed to me, and which I found, when drank, to be my *quantum sufficit.*

Emboldened by the freedom which was extended towards me, they believing me to be

their inferior, and the numerous glasses of spirits and water that I had imbibed, I asked, without any preamble to the question, what was the crime that Floss the shepherd had committed.

"Why, murder, man!" screamed the major. "Murder!—did you not know that?—and he was within that (snapping his fingers) of the gallows. He is as great a rogue as we have got in the colonies; and yet I must say there never was a better shepherd."

"I thought so," I said. "I felt that he was a murderer, as we sat side by side."

"Take no notice of what I have said, Morton," he continued; "for your own sake, take no notice."

As the old man uttered those words he rose, and, by means of sundry tacks, he reached the door, which I held open for him.

At last young Blois and myself were alone. Although excited, he was decidedly the steadiest of the party; there was nothing of that Australian fastness, which is so disgusting to a newcomer, in the manner of the old major's son;

not an oath did I hear from his lips the whole evening; and, indeed, he was very near being a perfect gentleman. I could have formed a friendship for young Blois of no ordinary kind. Innately a gentleman, a few years in England, which he had never visited, would have made him a man who would have shone in any society.

It was late when I retired to my humble couch; and I found all the inmates of the shepherds' hut asleep.

CHAPTER IV.

Obtain a Situation as Shepherd.—Alteravon.—All from the "Land o' Cakes."—A Scotch Shepherd.—Sheep Lost by me.—Sweetvale.—A Rough Ride.—The "Dead Horse Gully."—Beauties of Sweetvale.—Old Hands.—Shepherding at Sweetvale.—A Shepherd's Life.—"Hell's Hole."—My Flock.—A Shepherd's Supper.—Officiate as Groom.—Bed in a Bullock-dray.—A Fearful Storm.—Start after the Flock.—Suffer from Hunger.—Fear of Hell's Hole.—Suffering from Excruciating Thirst.—A Night almost in Despair.—Thirst leaves me.—My Benumbed Limbs.—Anxiety about my Flock.—Thirty-eight Hours' Fast.—Welcome Relief.—Sheep Lost.

LONG before sunrise, Floss, the new shepherd, and myself, sat down to breakfast, which, being ended, we started upon our day's work. The same delightful weather and the same lovely scenery rendered the many hours that we had to pass in the open air anything but tedious. And the more that I saw of the art of shepherding, the more it pleased me; yet I did not altogether shut my eyes to the fact of there being many drawbacks to it, as a life of pleasure, in the winter season.

In the evening I was again sent for into the dining-room, when young Blos told me that he

had succeeded in procuring me a situation as a shepherd, with one Mr. Hinton, who resided three miles from Kilmore; and that I was to go into that town as early as possible in the morning, to meet my new employer. Mr. Blois kindly offered me a horse to ride, as he was sending two into town, for the purpose of being shod.

I thanked both father and son for the kindness that they had displayed towards me, and rejoined the shepherds in their hut.

At five o'clock the following morning, accompanied by one of Blois's servants, I started for the town of Kilmore. The ten miles were soon completed, when we put the horses up at a very decent inn, called the "Dunrobin Castle."

Kilmore, although taking its name from a town in Ireland, was essentially Scotch, as far as the inhabitants were concerned. Situated in an agricultural district of great beauty, the land was excellent and beautifully farmed, and I thought that I had never seen better farming; but the Scotch are proverbial for being good farmers.

I had not been long in the town when Mr. Hinton was pointed out to me. He was riding

with two squatters; stopping him, I told him that I had been sent by Mr. Blois, hearing that he required a shepherd.

Mr. Hinton I found to be an exceedingly kind sort of a man; but it was evident, although in the commission of the peace, that he had made himself what he was. He desired me to go at once to Alteravon, which was three miles distant, and said that he would shortly follow me.

How many delightful associations were connected with the name Alt-yr-Avon! it was Welsh, and I found out subsequently that the first person who had "squatted" on that spot was a Welshman. The walk to Hinton's residence was through a beautiful country; but the house was wretched in the extreme. Not long, however, were we there, for my employer had purchased a run some fifteen miles on the other side of Kilmore, which, in a fortnight after my joining him, we went to.

I arrived at Alteravon before Mr. Hinton, and immediately entered the shepherd's hut, where I found a very respectable-looking woman, whom, by her strong accent, I found to

be Scotch. She informed me that she was the shepherd's wife; that her husband was out with his sheep; and that at that time one shepherd only was kept by Mr. Hinton, all the flocks, with the exception of one, having been sold. She also told me that her master was Scotch, as was also her mistress.

Upon asking her if her husband was from the "land o' cakes," she said that her "Jamie was a real son of Scotia, and a Hielandman."

I was much pleased to hear an excellent character of my employer; but rather astonished when told to be cautious what I said when in the hut, as the mistress was in the habit of putting her little children to act as eavesdroppers.

To while away the time until the return of Hinton, I chopped fire-wood for the shepherd's wife, and enough to last her for a week.

Towards sun-down, tired with waiting for my master, I determined to go and meet the shepherd on his return with his charge, which I did, about a mile from the camping-ground.

We were speedily on excellent terms, and finding that I had been living in Ross-shire, and

knew the immediate neighbourhood of his birth, our fraternization (if I may make use of such a term) was of a solid nature, and lasted during my residence with Mr. Hinton.

In answer to my expressing surprise at the smallness of the flock, which was not eight hundred, he told me that the best had all been sold; but that his master had purchased a beautiful place, with seven or eight thousand sheep; and he feared that I should find the shepherding somewhat difficult, as the ranges were very high, and thickly wooded, with here and there low ground, covered with the finest pasturage.

Morrison, for that was the shepherd's name, was well educated for his station in life; indeed, as a nation, there is no denying that the lower orders of the Scotch are vastly superior to the English, or to the inhabitants of the sister isle.

It was late when Mr. Hinton arrived; I was at once engaged by him upon the regular terms, and the sheep handed over to me, which I was to tend on the following morning, for the first time.

I managed to acquit myself, on making my

début as a shepherd, perfectly to my own satisfaction, although I had a very difficult flock, small as it was, to manage; for they were the cullings of all his stock; some were ewes who had lambs running by their sides; some were crawlers (the greatest misery to a shepherd), and the rest were strong healthy wethers, who fed at the rate of three miles an hour. So uneven a flock gave a vast deal of labour; but as I was told that none of them would be taken to the new run, I said nothing, and tried to do my best.

The day prior to the departure for the new station, which, as I have said, was fifteen miles from Kilmore, I was ordered to bring all my sheep into the pens, in order that they might be counted over, when to my disgust it was found out that I had lost seventeen.

Hinton, although evidently annoyed at my apparent negligence, did not bully and bluster; and on my telling him that I would pay him for his sheep, he laughed outright, telling me that he feared if he was to stop from my wages the value of what I lost, my receipts would be next door to nil at the end of the year.

The next day we were to leave for Sweetvale, his new residence; and a lovely spot it proved to be; with an excellent residence, and the usual out-buildings attached.

Before separating at the sheep pens, I was asked by Hinton if I could ride. I told him that I could do so, and well; he then told me that I should have to take two horses to his new run; that he was sorry that he could not give me a man's saddle, but if I could manage with that of his wife, I might use it; otherwise I should have to ride bare back.

I told him that it was all the same to me; and so the subject dropped. Little did I then anticipate the misery I was about to endure.

My charge over, the uneven flock had again devolved upon Morrison, who with his wife was to remain at Alteravon for a month.

The following morning, at ten o'clock, the drays having gone on with the baggage, Hinton and his wife started in their dog-cart for Kilmore, where he had business, which he said would detain him for two hours. He told me not to attempt to go on without him, as the road was most difficult,

and, after the first mile, entirely through bush; the hills too, he said, were many, and very steep.

Riding cross-legged upon a woman's saddle, however well made, is not pleasant; and that of Mrs. Hinton's was about as bad a one as I ever saw. Galled to death in cantering the three miles into Kilmore, I determined to ride the remaining fifteen without a saddle.

At two o'clock in the afternoon we started from Kilmore, at an Australian pace; the men out in that colony appearing to scorn anything under twelve miles an hour.

Shaken to death by the first half-broken brute, I resolved upon trying the one I had led, puller as he was. No sooner was my master *en route* than I sprung upon his back. The beast, who was a star-gazer, started off at a hand gallop, well kept in company by the one that I was leading. In a few minutes I was down the one long street of Kilmore, and to my astonishment without killing any one. The stirrup of the lady's saddle had got loose from the pummel, where I had hung

it, and was thumping away at the side of my led horse, which pulled unmercifully.

"Where are you off to?" cried Hinton, as, like John Gilpin, I dashed by the dog-cart; "pull up; you will never find your way."

"Who can pull up a pair of tear-away devils like these?" I replied in anger, and I did not succeed in doing so until a good quarter of a mile had been placed between us.

Oh! what a heat I was in, when Hinton and his wife caught me up. My usual good temper was fast giving way, as he told me to keep behind him.

The first mile was got over, when we began to descend a dingle of singular beauty, called "Dead Horse Gully;" not that I had any eyes that day for scenery. The road was execrable, and so tall were the gum trees that it appeared as if night had suddenly come on; we were indeed entering the bush. Down the hill drove Hinton at the same pace he had started; and which to wonder at most, I knew not—the courage of his wife, or the sure-footedness of the animal she sat behind. Shaken as I was, I was forced to keep

the dog-cart in sight, so numerous were the tracks: and thus the reader may fancy the state I was in when we reached Sweetvale.

Had I arrived at Hinton's new residence under any other circumstances than those I did, I should have fancied myself in fairy-land. With the greatest difficulty I got off the beast that I had ridden, and opened the gates for my employer to drive into his new domain.

"What do you think of this place, Morton?" said Hinton.

"I'll tell you by-and-by, when I have had something to drink," I replied.

After the Hintons had vacated the dog-cart, I took the three horses to the stable, where, I must confess, they received but a small modicum of dressing from your humble servant. Giving each a wisp over, and a bucket of water to drink, I threw a peck and a half of oats into the manger, and went in search of the rendezvous of the shepherds. So stiff was I from my long ride, that I could hardly walk; but I felt immensely relieved after drinking off a pannikin of cold tea. The run which Hinton had taken

possession of, was purchased from a Doctor Gilmore, another Scotchman, who had done well in the colony, and was returning with his wife and family to his own country.

For the first week we were all at sixes and sevens. Doctor Gilmore and his family still remained at Sweetvale; and it was optional with the five shepherds who had been in his service, to remain with Mr. Hinton or to take their discharge. Only one left; thus the number remained the same by my arrival.

As hut-keepers I found another brawny "Hielandman," and his wife, who had with them a family of seven: the eldest son was one of the shepherds, and was ordered to show me the run on the following morning. This family, however, did not long remain with us, for being so numerous they were found greatly in the way.

As I sat amongst the shepherds at our evening meal, I "took stock" of the inmates of our bark domicile; and one half-hour's listening stamped three of them as "old hands," which means, to the uninitiated, men who had been transported.

The dwelling-house of Sweetvale was beauti-

fully situated on a gentle rise of ground near to the Running River, the same stream which ran by Major Blois's residence: in every direction there was nothing to be seen but forest, and towering ranges. It is true that just around the house a few acres had been cleared.

The first day's shepherding at Sweetvale was enough to convince me of its difficulty, where the entire run was composed of numberless ranges; one vast tract of woodland. My troubles were not a little increased by my having allotted to my charge one thousand three hundred sheep, many of which were crawlers, many ewes who had lambs, and the rest healthy wethers. It was indeed a mixed and a miserable flock.

It was some days before I could learn anything of the run; one range resembled another, and each little valley also. My flock whilst feeding would take a distance of a quarter of a mile; sometimes the end of one line would be up some towering wooded height, whilst the other was feeding at the bottom of some little valley. Then again the denseness of the foliage

precluded all possibility of my keeping my eye on the entire flock.

In about ten days after our arrival at Sweetvale the Scotch hut-keeper and all his family left, and of course among the number went my guide, the shepherd to whose flock I had succeeded. I was sorry to part with Sandy McTavish, for he was an honest, good fellow.

On the evening of the departure of the Scotch family a new hut-keeper and another shepherd were introduced to our humble circle. I was much taken with the former, as he threw his swag down on entering, and asked for a drink of tea.

"You are another, are you," said I to myself, "that have seen a different life to this you are about to enter on?" And before a week was over the head of that hut-keeper, I had wormed from him that he was a mate in the navy, and a man of good family. We became great friends; he was an admirable cook, and one of the most obliging men I ever met.

One morning, on leaving with my sheep, I was astonished to find myself accompanied by

Mr. Hinton, who was mounted upon a very nice barb. He told me that he wished to show me a beautiful piece of feeding-ground, which he supposed I had never discovered, being rather distant; and at the same time warned me never to go beyond a certain range, or hill, for if I by accident got there, I might be lost. "Harry," said he, "when I tell you the name of the spot I wish you to avoid, it will give you some idea of the place; it is called 'Hell's Hole' by the shepherds; and it is a frightful place, when once in, to get out of: and if sheep are lost there, it may be months before they are recovered; if, indeed, ever. Moreover, it is at the extremity of my run."

I promised faithfully to do my best to avoid the dreaded spot, and with him followed the flock to the place where the good pasturage was to be found. The distance to the Water Valley (taking that name from a little stream which meandered through it) was about four miles from the camping-ground: it was, indeed, a beautiful spot in every way; and ultimately became a frequent beat of mine.

Hinton remained with me until the sheep camped for their accustomed rest: getting off his horse, he hung the bridle rein over the branch of a tree and sat himself down. I was smoking at the time, and he asked me to give him a light: he himself was the greatest consumer of the noxious weed, as it is called, that I ever met with.

"Harry," said he, "sit down; your sheep are camped for at least three hours, and they have fed well: when they move off again, beware of Hell's Hole; there it lies, just over yon hill. And now, Harry," he continued, "who the deuce are you? for I cannot make you out."

"A good shepherd to you, Mr. Hinton," I replied, "as far as endeavouring to do my duty goes: you have not an honester man in your employ than Harry Morton."

"I know it, Morton, and I have watched you, and it is my intention to change your flock. Next week you shall have as even a lot as is to be found in Australia, but it will be a large one. Can you manage two thousand, think you?"

"Certainly I can," I replied, "and as easy as

one thousand, as long as old Jack is left with me. Sheep-killer as he is when he gets the chance, he is the best dog about the run; the young one that I have is not of much use at present, but he shows a deal of breed. He is a real Scotch collie, and no mistake."

"You are right, Morton," said Hinton; "Jack is a sheep-killer; but take care of the young dog; he will make something out of the common way in another year."

I smiled as he said another year. "Where shall I be," said I to myself, "this time twelve months?"

Hinton then rose, shook the ashes from his pipe, whilst I disentangled the rein of the horse's bridle from the branch of the gum tree, upon which he had twisted it. As I held his horse's head whilst he mounted, he again said, "Harry, will you tell me who you are?"

"Mr. Hinton," I replied, "I am of honest parentage, and came out to this colony to better myself. I am not a lag, and there is another in your establishment who is also free. Should it be the case, as is currently reported among the

shepherds, that I am to go to an out-station, would you, sir, allow that man to be my hut-keeper?"

"I will, if you go—I know whom you mean," he replied, "but he is a bad butcher, and I find that he gets others to kill for him, and you will not have time to do everything."

I said no more, for I was loth to confess my total want of knowledge of dressing a sheep; yet determined to overcome the repugnance that I felt in taking life, so that I might succeed in having one of my own station as my companion.

Hinton had not left me half an hour when the flock began to move, and, to my delight, to feed steadily towards home. "Well," said I to myself, as I looked towards Hell's Hole, "I trust I shall steer clear of that Tartarean spot, although this little valley which I am now leaving will be so frequently visited by me."

As the sun went down that evening, my sheep were on their camping-ground; and leaving them in perfect security, I hastened to the hut, where the usual grand meal of the day awaited us. That evening I was the last shepherd who

brought home his flock; and strange as it may appear, there existed a feeling amongst us rude creatures of non-selfishness which would have done credit to many an habitué at the Mansion House in London. We invariably gave half an hour's law to any missing member of our society.

I was just in the act of helping myself to a delicious cut from the haunch, when I heard my name called loudly out. It was Hinton's voice, and obliged to go I was. Rising from the table in anything but a good-humour, for I was excessively hungry, I walked towards the house.

At the door I saw three persons on horseback —two very pretty young ladies and a fine young fellow of about twenty-five years of age; who I afterwards heard was a squatter of no mean pretensions.

"Harry," said Hinton, "hold these horses a bit, will you?"

"Certainly," I said, as I began to assist one of the pretty girls out of her saddle, whilst the young squatter attended on the other fair horsewoman.

"I am sorry," continued my master, "to take you away from your supper for a short time; but I called for you, Harry, as I have always found you willing and obliging."

"You will always find me the same, Mr. Hinton," said I; "more especially when I have such ladies as these to wait upon," looking up into my fair one's face. With a good-tempered smile the two girls entered the house, followed by their male companion.

For an hour and a half was I kept holding the horses, and began to feel a little angry at their want of thought in keeping me from my supper; as it is well known the only good meal a shepherd has, throughout the day, is the evening one. However, I amused myself in minutely inspecting the saddles and bridles, which were of the very best description; in fact, I never saw such exquisite workmanship as that of the two side-saddles: but everything was in keeping, and it was evident that they were all of English manufacture. At last the visitors came out, and the same young lady I had assisted to dismount, took her place by the side of her horse, waiting

for her friend the squatter to put her into the saddle. Looking into her pretty face with an air of innocence, I offered my services. Whether she fancied from my costume that I knew nothing of the duties of a groom, I knew not; but it was plain to be seen that she gave me her foot with some little reluctance; in an instant she was in her seat, and her little foot in the stirrup.

"That is not the first time you have put a lady into her saddle, shepherd, I am sure?" said she.

"No, Miss," I replied, "not by hundreds."

Leaving the young lady, I went to the assistance of the gentleman, whose horse was rather difficult to mount. I held him by the head until he was seated, when I turned towards the hut, but not without having another little peep at the pretty faces of the two girls.

"Holloa, shepherd! come back here!" cried out the young farmer. "What a hurry you are in! Here's something for your trouble; it will do to buy bacca."

I hardly knew what to do in the presence of the fair ones, when he put three half-crowns into

my hand; but when I remembered the character that I had assumed, and which I was very desirous to act up to, I decided upon taking it. I thanked him, and again moved off for the shepherds' quarters, but not before I had a second peep at the handsome girls, who treated me to a smile as I raised my hat from my head, on wishing them a fine evening.

My friend the hut-keeper had kept my supper warm, and no alderman ever relished his dinner more than I did my supper that evening.

I have forgotten to mention that I had, after the first night of my arrival, made my bed in a bullock-dray; and in this I slept for four months, the entire time that I lived with Mr. Hinton. There were two reasons for my preferring to sleep under a shed, which was open at the sides, to a warm hut: the first was, that I liked not my associates (the hut-keeper excepted); the second was on account of the fleas and bugs which swarmed in that house made of bark.

The bullock-dray in which I made my bed was perfectly new; in fact, it never had been in

use, and into it I was accustomed to creep every night to sleep. It is true, for the first night or two I found the boards very hard, having nothing but a blanket under me; but I soon managed to sleep very soundly on the bed of that dray with an empty six-gallon cask for my pillow.

One night, about a month after I had joined Hinton (I remember it was a fearful night of wind and rain), I had a very disagreeable mishap. It was this: the large pole of my dray rested upon the back of an old worn-out dog-cart, in the open shed I have alluded to, and which adjoined the stables. We had numerous horses at that time, running out in the cleared ground around the houses. When lying fast asleep that night, the horses rushed in, frightened, I presume, at the storm, and knocked the pole of the dray from its support. Down came the huge two-wheeled machine from its horizontal position, frightening me out of my wits; for, what with the shaking I received, the noise of the frightened animals as they galloped off, and the howling of the wind, it was some time before

I could make out where I was: the night, too, was dark in the extreme, which completed the catalogue of my miseries. Not knowing what to do, for the rain was driving into the shed on the side where the dray was, I thought at last that I would get through the window of the stable adjoining, and creep under the manger, where, at least, I should be safe from the effects of the awful storm that was raging; and awful, indeed, it was to listen to the falling of the dead trees, which, dead as they were, had stood for years in that condition, as one after another came to the ground. Standing on my little six-gallon cask, I managed to make my entry to the stable, and under the manger, in which Hinton's white Arab fed, I laid myself down and slept soundly until daybreak.

When I crept from my lowly couch in the morning, and looked out of the window of the stable, I could see the effects of the storm, by the numberless branches of trees, which were lying about in all directions; but the weather had moderated, and there was every prospect of another beautiful day.

I had the same difficulty in getting out of the stable as I had in getting in; but luckily a friendly bucket afforded me the desired assistance, and I found myself in the shepherds' hut, before any one had risen.

It was my habit, should my sheep camp any where near the Running River, to bathe in the middle of the day; for the opportunities and capabilities that we poor shepherds had of making a toilette were indeed few.

Finding no signs of breakfast, and without awaking any of the slumberers, I walked down to the river (not five minutes distant from our hut), and bathed. From the spot where I had undressed I could see my flock, and the sun I knew would not rise for another half-hour; but I had not been a minute in the water, which was bitterly cold, when I saw, to my dismay, the entire flock moving off to their feed. Rushing to the bank, I dressed myself as speedily as possible, and followed them, not giving one thought at the moment to the fact of my being without anything to satisfy my hunger, and perhaps nothing to quench my thirst for fourteen hours.

This was indeed a day of trials, and the night which followed was one of intense anguish, and which I shall long remember.

That day, instead of the air being cooled by the storm, was about as hot as any day I felt whilst in the colony.

Not a thought did I give to my empty wallet until the pangs of hunger reminded me that I had had no breakfast; that I could have borne; but to be without my bottle of cold tea, and perhaps see no water for the whole day, made me very nervous.

My sheep having moved off before I could be with them, had taken a line of their own, and as it was some time before I came up to them, they had led me among ranges which were entirely unknown to me. Not knowing the country, I left all to my flock, trusting to their returning at sundown to their own camping-ground.

Old Jack, who never left my side, was destined to go without his dinner that day, as well as myself, unless he took it, as he frequently did, unlawfully. He was indeed a cunning dog; but

I could not "rate" him, for he loved his master.

For hours that day I followed my flock; and range after range was traversed before they "coiled" (settled to rest during the heat of the day). Thicker and thicker became the scrub, when at last I found myself in a perfect maze, and there my flock chose to camp. No signs of water were there to be found, and I began to feel nervous lest I should be in the neighbourhood of the forbidden ground, "Hell's Hole."

The fern, which grew to a gigantic height, and the towering gum-trees, nearly deprived me of all sight of my sheep; yet I was satisfied that the flock had settled down. Having no fear that my charge would move for the next three hours, I started off in search of water. Not a vestige was there to be found; not even one of those little dry beds of rivulets, which are so full and so bubbling in the winter months, could I descry.

With a very uncomfortable feeling I returned to my sheep, which I found still refreshing

themselves in the cool spot they had selected for their siesta.

My poor dogs gave me great uneasiness. I myself was suffering from thirst, but my hunger had vanished altogether; and when I considered that perhaps the sun might fail me, and that the sheep might miss to return to their home at night to camp, I began to have serious notions as to my safety.

At about half-past three o'clock that afternoon my flock began again to move for feeding; through the thick and lofty fern and dense scrub I followed them. I thought the ranges became higher; two had I passed over, when I found that my flock had indeed drawn me into Hell's Hole. As the conviction came over me that I was actually in the spot so much dreaded, and Hinton's words rushed to my remembrance, a cold shiver came over me; for the thought of dying from thirst was dreadful in the extreme.

Oh, how I prayed that the sun would but only show itself, to give me some idea of where I was! but no; beautiful as the morning had

been, after twelve o'clock the weather had become gloomy.

I had nothing to do, but to leave all to my sheep. It was quite apparent that evening was fast drawing on; the sheep still fed steadily, and, as I guessed, evenly; but whether towards home or away from it, I could not tell.

One more hour did I follow that flock, when darkness—which comes on rapidly in that distant colony, with little or no twilight—set in, and left me for the night in one of the wildest spots the reader can imagine. It was indeed in Hell's Hole that I was benighted!

If ever mortal suffered mental agony, I did that night. My thirst was so excruciating that I chewed gum-leaves; I tried the stalks of the fern in my wild endeavours to find something by which to moisten my parched tongue; but no; relief was denied me, and I felt that I was doomed to the most painful of deaths!

It was a piteous sight, indeed, to watch the poor dogs as they looked up into my face for water. They would draw nigh to me with dilated eyes, which bespoke the agony that they

were suffering, and then retire and lie down, but at some distance, and nothing that I could do would induce them to stay by my side.

Gathering as much fern as possible, I made myself a bed upon the ground. Unfortunately I had no blankets with me that night, having been obliged to follow my flock, which so unexpectedly moved off to feed.

I was quite aware of the intensity of cold that I was about to undergo, and again endeavoured to get my dogs to lie by me, but nothing would induce them to come near me. In the wildness of my despair, I knelt down and offered up my prayers to my Maker—supplications which had been so often heard in somewhat similar trying situations in Australia. The relief I felt on rising from my knees, I cannot describe.

Drawing as much fern as I possibly could over me, to protect myself from the heavy dew, I laid myself down. Not a sound was there to be heard, but that which came now and then from the flock, which were within thirty yards of where I had made my bed.

I fell asleep, and must have slept for some

hours, when I awoke, I presume, from the intensity of the cold; but my thirst was gone. The darkness of that night was extreme; not a star was there to be seen in the firmament; not a breath of wind disturbed a branch of the gigantic gum-trees, under which I was lying. Yet the cold was excessive. My trousers, which were of moleskin, were saturated; and had I been drawn through a river, I could hardly have been more wet.

Benumbed in every limb, but more especially in the legs, I endeavoured to rise. My efforts were of no avail; I could not stand. I could raise myself no higher than my knees, and on those knees, in that dismal and dreary spot, I poured out my heart again to God, who has never refused to listen to my prayers, when offered up in a proper spirit.

Whilst endeavouring to crawl to the trunk of a gum-tree which was close at hand, and by which I hoped to be able to raise myself, so that I could stand, I was startled by something touching my cheek, when, to my delight, I found that that which had so much alarmed me,

was the cold nose of my old dog Jack. Again I laid myself down, and pulled the faithful old fellow to my side; no longer did he try to get from me, for he nestled to me, and licked my face and hands. I felt that I was no longer alone. After caressing the companion of my trials for some time, I again commenced my labours to reach the gum-tree, which I at last succeeded in doing.

Putting my arms round the trunk as far as I could, I managed at last to place myself in an upright position, and there for some minutes I stood. I then commenced, still holding by one hand the tree, to chafe my thighs and knees; by degrees a slight feeling of warmth was perceptible, and I inwardly prayed for daybreak.

It was not long before that dawn which I so much desired became apparent. My first thought was my flock, and with searching eyes I looked towards the spot where I calculated they had camped. I could see them; but how many in that flock I knew not—I could not guess,—so thick was the terrible place in which my sheep had chosen to settle down for the night.

To attempt to go near the flock, anxious as I was to know if all my charge was there, would have been madness; as it is well known that if sheep are disturbed before the time which instinct tells them to move in search of food, they are restless and unsettled for the entire day.

Some time I had to wait before that glorious luminary, the sun, shone forth; and that time was not altogether misspent; for my prayers for assistance from the painful position I was in, and the thanksgiving for my release from thirst, were long and fervent that morning.

The flock moved; and I, who had perfectly regained the use of my limbs, now prepared to follow them; and with the doubts and fears that then racked my brain, I was by no means well at ease. The scrub was so thick that my eyes never lighted upon more than from twenty to thirty sheep at one time; but that they were feeding towards home, I knew by the sun, and I was also fully confident that I was still in Hell's Hole. We had not been half an hour on the move, when I was startled from the reverie into which I had fallen, by the sudden

return of my other sheep cur. He, like Jack, had, it appeared, lost his thirst, and came jumping up to me, showing the most unmistakable signs of delight in finding his master.

Although I was fully aware that every exertion would be made that morning to discover where I was, I was far from feeling comfortable. At first, on finding that my thirst had totally left me, I felt such a degree of pleasure, that all my other troubles appeared as very slight, when put in comparison with the unspeakable anguish I had suffered from want of water. But when I began to reflect that I perhaps had lost some hundreds of sheep, and that I had undoubtedly incurred Hinton's displeasure, which at all times I was most anxious to avoid doing, I felt very miserable. Added to this, I began to feel excessively hungry, not having had anything to eat for thirty-eight hours, and nothing wherewith to quench my thirst since I bathed the previous morning. At about eleven o'clock, as I judged by the sun, I distinctly heard the report of fire-arms, and commenced giving a series of "koo-ee-jes;" no answer, however, was returned:

again I heard another report from a gun, which appeared to be nearer, when I gave one more prolonged cry. This was heard; and the answering "koo-ee-je" assured me of certain and speedy relief.

The feeling of happiness that came over me was much damped by the doubts I had as to the number of sheep I should see when I found myself in some more open ground. Nearer and nearer came the cries of those who were in search of me, and at last I could distinctly hear voices in conversation; and shortly afterwards I saw three men approaching, one of whom I knew to be Hinton himself, by his white Arab.

"Henry," said he, in the kindest manner, "why did you not attend to my orders, when I desired you to avoid this dreadful place? You must be half-starved, and where you have found water, I know not. However, I have brought you a good breakfast, and plenty to quench your thirst with. Bring that basket here," said he, turning round in his seat, and addressing one of the two shepherds who had acccompanied him.

I thanked him, and took the basket; but before I began to satisfy my hunger, I told him how it was that, owing to my not knowing the run, and the sun having ceased to show itself after twelve o'clock in the day, the sheep had drawn me to the forbidden spot.

"Never mind, Henry, so long as you are safe. I only trust that you have not lost many out of your flock; but until we can get out of this dense scrub, nothing can we know. The sheep are making towards home, and by-and-by we shall be on the Bald hill."

Hinton then told one of his men to dismount, and to take my place with the flock, whilst I rode with him. To this I objected, saying that I was not in the least fatigued, and that I preferred taking my own sheep home.

I then commenced my breakfast, which was indeed a good one: nor was a bottle of cold tea, or a supply of spirits and water, wanting. It was about three o'clock, on reaching the foot of the Bald hill, that our track became more open, and I became thoroughly aware of the consequences of my night's sojourn in Hell's Hole.

"By heaven, Morton!" exclaimed Hinton, "you have lost more than half your sheep; but go on with these that you have, whilst I and the two shepherds here try if possible to recover some of them: this is the Bald hill, and you now know your way. You have indeed made a nice job by coming to this cursed spot!" This was about the first oath that I ever heard from Hinton's lips.

He then turned his horse's head, and, accompanied by the two mounted shepherds, took a direction exactly opposite to that which I was going. I did not attempt to make any further excuses for my apparent want of care; I had told the truth. I did not know, and never did thoroughly learn the run, so difficult was it to make out one little valley from another; valleys which were caused by "spurs," as they are called, which run down from the highest points of the ranges, all verging in different directions.

It is true that it was only on days when there was no sunshine that I felt the slightest uneasiness as to my flock; but a dull day in that

densely-wooded country was a day of great perplexity to me.

At sundown, the half of the flock that I had taken out two days previously were encamped upon their own ground; and within half an hour of that time the two shepherds had returned, each bringing home a certain number, and my losses were reduced to the sum of only four hundred, as they judged from the size of the flock when together. It was very consolatory to me, that so many had been so speedily recovered, which gave me great hopes of again finding all my lost sheep. Of course, I had to put up with a deal of bantering from the other shepherds; they called me one of their master's bad bargains; and were anxious to know if my mother was aware of my absence. But as it was generally said in good-nature, I smiled and took their chaffing with imperturbable serenity.

My friend, the hut-keeper, was much pleased to see me return, and was the first to inform me that Hinton meant to give me a holiday the following day, to recruit myself. I told him that I did not require it, but that if it was offered

me, I would take it, and remain at home and assist him in anything, such as cutting fire-wood, and carrying water.

It was Hinton's habit, when our supper was over, to come and talk to his shepherds; and that evening he did, to my annoyance, as I was sure the subject of my bad shepherding would be brought up. He, however, told me, that on the beat he had been, none could he see; that he trusted that in time they might be picked up, but he considered that I had lost nearly five hundred of his sheep.

Nothing more could I say than to express my sorrow, and to assure him of my untiring endeavours to recover my loss. The subject was then dropped, and he told me to remain at the hut the next day and take my ease. I thanked him, and accepted the offer of a day's holiday, knowing that I should have an opportunity of talking to the hut-keeper without fear of our conversation being overheard. As usual, having readjusted my dray, I crept into my airy couch to enjoy a real good night's rest.

CHAPTER V.

A Fearful Wound.—Misery of Waiting at Table.—Recovery of the Lost Sheep.—Ticket-of-leave Men.—Claim for some of the Sheep Recovered.—Sheep Restored.—Splendid Flock.—Matrimony Proposed.—To Melbourne with a Flock.—Instructions for my Journey.—Borrow an Outfit.—Borrowed Plumes.—Harmless Mischief.—Pleasant Encounter.—Dialogue with Miss Carpenter.

THE shepherds' breakfasts were over, and all, with the exception of the hut-keeper and myself, had left: I had assisted my friend to wash up the tin plates and dishes (a thing, by-the-by, I disliked beyond anything), when, refusing my offer to do it, he went out to chop firewood. He had not been long away when he entered the hut, holding one hand in the other, both covered with blood: on my asking him what on earth was the matter, he said that he had nearly chopped his hand off at the wrist. Bandaging it up as well as I could for the moment, I ran up to the house to ask if they had any oils for cuts, and some linen rags with which to dress the frightful gash my friend had received. Mrs.

Hinton, whom I saw, gave me some linen and some stuff with which to dress the wound, but the manner in which the necessary articles were handed to me, and the remark, that there was no end to our wants, rendered my temper not altogether even: but when she told me that, as Fullerton was injured, I must turn to and cook her dinner, and do all my friend's work, my generally even temper became downright nasty, an expressive, but not elegant term, it is true. The fact was, my employer's wife had taken a singular dislike to me from the first, and which I believe to have arisen from her husband having shown such a marked difference in his manner towards myself and the other shepherds. Mrs. Hinton must have seen by my manner that I was anything but satisfied with the way in which she complied with my request for something to bandage up her hut-keeper's arm; but I said nothing, took the things, and returned to the shepherds' building.

It was a fearful gash that Fullerton had inflicted on his wrist, but it was speedily bandaged up, and an old worn-out handkerchief being

made into a sling, he said that he would do all that he could to assist me in the labour of cooking. Of course I had informed him of all that Mrs. Hinton had said.

At midday, whilst preparing for our master's dinner, a dirty slatternly girl, who was one of the female domestics (two only were kept), entered our hut and told me to make ready a meal for five persons, informing me that the same young squatter and his two lady friends, of whom I have spoken, were expected to pass the day at Sweetvale. This was indeed the climax of my misery. "A pretty holiday!" said I. "By Jove! I wish I had gone with my sheep, and were it not on your account, Fullerton, I would not cook a joint." My friend expressed his regret that my day of rest had been turned into trouble on his account, and said that he could do everything that only required the use of one hand, and that, together, all would go well.

But that which most troubled me was the thought of waiting at table. I felt there was nothing menial in shepherding, or, indeed, in any out-door employment in the colonies, but to

become a footman out of livery, and wait upon my inferiors, it galled me immensely. "Yet," said I to myself, "some fun will come out of this, and I will do it; it will please Hinton, and that is everything." With a hearty good will, Fullerton and I commenced our operations; a fine haunch of mutton was put into a large Dutch oven to bake, a roley-poley pudding was manufactured between us (a quantity of jam having been sent to us), which turned out to be a *chef-d'œuvre* in the art of cooking. I had for once an unlimited run over the garden, and everything I pulled and cut, which I thought would come in as well for the shepherds' suppers as the mistress's dinner. The time came for the cloth to be laid, and much indeed I had to do to bring my courage to the sticking point. The thought of the black eyes of the fair horsewoman who had smiled so sweetly on me as I had raised my hat from my head, after putting her into the saddle, beholding me in the capacity of a "Jeames," annoyed me beyond measure. Still determined to go through my task, I asked Fullerton to look to the meat and the pudding,

and to boil the vegetables, and I walked to the house.

I was not long in laying the table, assisted by the mistress; and returned to the hut with the dishes in which to serve up.

Never did two men laugh over their work, as Fullerton and I did, as we put dish after dish on a large tray, on which I was to carry the provender to the house.

Telling the hut-keeper not to let the pudding be boiled to rags, I started, tray in hand, and in five minutes the first course was on the table.

Hinton, who had gone to Kilmore, had not returned; and thus, only his wife and her three guests sat down to dinner.

What the young squatter and the two girls were laughing at on entering the room, I cannot say; but it is certain that I was in some way or another a source of great amusement to the three: and frequently I would catch the dark eyes of the one young lady looking at me in a most unmistakably roguish manner.

At last dinner was ended, and to my delight I was told that the girls would remove the

things from the table, and that my company could be dispensed with. Off I ran to the hut, and recounted to my friend the success that had attended my first attempt at waiting at table.

But my labours were not altogether over, for I received an intimation that the tea-things would be required at six o'clock. All passed off tolerably well, as I placed the evening meal on the table, only that I was nearly falling down with the entire equipage, and putting out the fire by the upsetting of the tea-kettle, which did not escape the notice of the two laughing girls. In the evening I had again the pleasure of putting my dark-eyed beauty and her sister into their saddles, when the young squatter dropped five shillings into my hand, which I immediately dropped into my pocket: clear profit to me by Fullerton's accident.

Three weeks had elapsed, and but few of my lost sheep had been picked up, which made me very uncomfortable, for I could see that Hinton began to consider that they would never be recovered, when one day as usual, attending to

my flock, I suffered them to take me to a distant part of the run, where I had never been before. The ranges were of the same character as all the others I had seen, if not higher: old Jack had been behaving ill during the morning, and I had thrashed him, which he decidedly took to heart, for I could not get him to do anything whatever; at last I missed him, and I thought that he had made for home. I still had my young dog with me, and therefore did not much feel his loss, and after a time thought no more of him.

As usual, in the heat of the day, the flock camped, and I sat down to my dinner. I had been on the ground about an hour, when I heard the sound of my old dog's voice at the top of the highest range, about a mile distant; he was evidently in chase: fancying that it might be an opossum, I took little notice of it, but at last I thought the sound came nearer, and I began to listen attentively. "Could it be my lost sheep?" I said to myself, as I strained my eyes in the direction from whence the sound came. A sudden feeling of joy came over me as the thought crossed my brain. Nearer came

the sound of old Jack's voice, and at last I could plainly see that they were sheep he was chasing.

With delight I sprang forward, endeavouring, if possible, to get a better view, when, on ascending a slightly wooded rise of ground, I saw a flock of sheep dash by, followed by my faithful old collie, and distant from me not two hundred yards: in another minute they were mixed with my flock, which of course were disturbed, and had commenced moving. I verily believe that that moment was one of the happiest of my life.

With what pleasure did I give old Jack the remains of my dinner; and as he looked up into my face with his tongue hanging from his mouth he seemed to say, "How could you thrash me? see what I have done?"

Never did shepherd wend his wearied steps towards home with a lighter heart than I did that evening. I could form no idea, for some hours, of the number of sheep my dog had added to my flock, but as I came on some well-known and open ground, it was made apparent to me that all those I had lost were regained.

With no eye but my Maker's to see me, I knelt down and offered up my thanks.

It was some hours to sundown, and as I followed the huge flock before me, I remarked that many of my recovered lot bore brands different to ours; but I cared not, and as I approached the resting-place of my charge, I thought that there never was a larger flock.

Before entering the shepherds' hut, I went to the residence of my master, and told him that I had recovered the sheep that I had lost. He was of course delighted; he told me that he would be with me in the morning, called me a "brick," and gave me two bottles of rum to take to the hut.

The two bottles of spirits were quite enough to make me perfect in the eyes of my *confrères*. I need not say that I was elated. Hinton came to us during the evening; he said he was pleased to see us all so happy, and he praised me as a pattern of perseverance. I was afraid as he spoke to look into old Jack's countenance, whose eyes were fixed upon mine, and who happened to be standing between my knees at the time, for had

I done so, I should decidedly have told the truth, and not taken the credit to myself, which so entirely belonged to Mr. Hinton's dog, of recovering the animals that I had so carelessly lost.

That night was a night of revelry; songs were sung, and stories were told; and as the spirit did its work, deeds of horror and of blood, which had long laid perhaps dormant, were recounted; which were quite sufficient to make the hair of a man's head stand on end of far greater a sinner than the writer of these memoirs.

I have said that all the occupants of the shepherds' quarters were ticket-of-leave men, with the exception of Fullerton the hut-keeper and myself. We two had very little to do with them, I especially, as I never changed, during my residence with Hinton, my sleeping quarters. I was accustomed to meet these fellows at breakfast, which was always long before sunrise, and to see no more of them until supper-time, which was after sunset; and as it was the summer months in which I undertook the duties of tend-

ing sheep, there were no long tedious evenings to force us to remain together in the same house; for as soon as the last meal of the day was over I went to my dray, and prepared for my night's rest.

About a week after the recovery of the lost sheep, the agent for the adjoining run visited us; he was servant to three old maids who possessed a large tract of land which included bullock and sheep runs. He was anxious, he said, to know from us shepherds, whether we had any sheep with his mistress's brand on them, which was a blue C stamped upon the rump. All denied that they had, but myself, as I owned that I had remarked that brand upon some of my flock.

He said that he would speak to Hinton; and so left. Two days afterwards the eldest of the three old maids, according to arrangements made with Hinton, accompanied by her agent and a shepherd, visited Sweetvale. She came on horseback; but, oh! what a contrast to the two sweet pretty girls that I had twice seen, did the mistress of the run next to us present!

That morning I had of course orders to drive my immense flock into a pen, which I did, where I remained by my sheep until the arrival of the party.

Hinton himself came to see what sheep would be claimed; and at the one open hurdle through which the entire flock were to pass, I was stationed to make the tally. It was evident, as the old maid surveyed the flock standing as thick as hops within the pen, that she saw many sheep which owned her as mistress.

Proud as Lucifer in having recovered my long-lost woolly ones, I stood at one side of the hurdle with knife and stick in hand to score down each twenty that passed from the pen. Opposite to me stood the old maid's agent, ready to seize each sheep that bore his mistress's mark, and another shepherd was in waiting to drive off in a contrary direction all that might be found belonging to les demoiselles C——.

"How many do you make them, Harry?" said Hinton, as the last sheep passed through, jumping up into the air as if delighted to be off.

"Two thousand and six in all," I replied.

"And I make two hundred and seventeen as belonging to us," said the Misses C——'s agent.

"All right, my men," exclaimed Hinton. "Harry, go off with your lot, lest they should mix, and make for the water valley; I will join you when they are camped."

According to orders, accompanied by old Jack and the young dog, I drove my flock in the direction of my favourite spot, inwardly rejoicing at my unaccountable luck in having picked up such an immense number of stray sheep. It is true, that there were yet many amongst my flock not belonging to our run: but Jack, whilst working that day on his own account, had found many sheep which had been lost from time to time by different shepherds before Sweetvale had come into Mr. Hinton's possession. It was indeed a joyous day for me, for I much liked my master.

Hinton did not come that day at the time he named; but we met as I was returning home. Getting off his horse, he walked by my side, and in course of conversation, after speaking

of the fine flock I had before me, he said—"Morton, what think you of Miss C——, the lady you saw to-day at the sheep pens?"

"Why, sir, she is not handsome; but I dare say that she is a good mistress enough," I replied.

"Well, Morton, I can only say," he continued, "she has taken quite a fancy to you: she says that you are the nicest shepherd that she has met with; she said so to Mrs. Hinton."

"She did, did she? then I'm afraid that Mrs. Hinton did not endorse the old gentlewoman's opinion," I replied laughingly.

"What makes you think so, Harry?"

"Why, because it appears to me that she has disliked me from the first. She might have felt vexed with me when I lost the sheep; but now that I have recovered them, there ought to be no ill-feeling towards a man who has done his best for her husband. I have appreciated your kindness, Mr. Hinton, and shall long remember it, and it strikes me forcibly that it is your good-will towards myself which has caused your wife to look coldly on me."

"Nonsense, Harry, there is nothing of the kind, I tell you; so think no more about it. What a splendid lot they look as they are now feeding! that is the way I like to see sheep feed: you will make an excellent shepherd, by-and-by, Morton, when once you know the run. Do you know that you have now before you near four hundred over the original flock entrusted to you? Many of them do not belong to me; and I have no doubt there are many in that flock which have not seen Sweetvale for many a long day. It strikes me that when you recovered all the lost ones you were off the run altogether."

"I know not to this day, Mr. Hinton, where I was; but I bless the accident that made me once again to be above shame before you, and in the presence of my brother shepherds. I did recover the sheep—" I looked at Jack as I spoke, fancying that if he could speak he would have said, What a dreadful lie!

On our way home, Hinton said that he wished me, in the morning, to take a letter for him to a neighbouring station, to acquaint him that many

of his sheep were in his possession. "It is only ten miles, and you shall have a horse; but mind, Harry, I expect you back at night with the answer."

Of course I was delighted at the prospect of a holiday; and after I had given him every assurance that I would attend to his wishes, I asked him whither was my destination. He told me that I was to go to an inn situated on the Sanday River (all are rivers in Australia), the name of which I cannot now remember, and that the landlord of the house would direct me. He also told me, by way I suppose of increasing the pleasure of my trip, that I should pass within half a mile of the Misses C——'s residence. "One or the other of them are always to be seen riding about. They harass their poor shepherds to death; they want husbands which they cannot get, and fancy that they are cheated by everyone. Yet they have money. Capital chance for you, Harry," he rattled on in a humour that I had never before seen him in; "the eldest is smitten with you. Marry her, Harry, and make a gentleman of yourself."

"But, Mr. Hinton," I said, "the lady would not look on the like of me; otherwise, I think I would try it, if you really tell me truth, sir, that she *did* express kindly feelings towards me. I should like to be a gentleman. I fancy, Mr. Hinton, pardon my speaking so freely, but I do fancy, if Providence would but place me in that situation, that my life would be

"Integer vitæ scelerisque purus."

"What, Morton, quoting Latin!" exclaimed Hinton, and loud enough to frighten all the sheep that were feeding before us in the most beautiful manner imaginable. "Who the d—l are you?"

"As I said before, Mr. Hinton, a good honest servant to you."

"I do not deny that, Harry; but at once tell me: are you not a gentleman by birth?—we have scores like you in the colony. Tell me the truth, Morton, and I will keep your secret."

"Mr. Hinton, I *am* a gentleman; my name is down in the list of those who are in the commission of the peace."

"Then I am right. I always said that you were a man raised above the common order; and it was only the other day that I told Mr. Jackson (the young squatter whose horses I had held) my suspicions. One word more, Morton. Have you not another name than that which you go under? I have promised to keep all secret that you tell me."

"Hinton," I replied (holding out my hand to him, and stopping as I spoke, which he immediately took in his), "my name is Charles Stretton. Ask no more questions; and remember, Mr. Hinton—for I shall henceforth, and as I have always done, give you that handle to your name—that I expect you will keep as sacred what I have this evening confessed. One only in your establishment knows who I am, and he is also a gentleman; you may easily surmise to whom I allude."

"My hut-keeper, Morton: I knew it. I had the same ideas about him as I had about you. This, indeed, is a strange world; and, in truth, in this hemisphere it is turned upside down."

"Fullerton, Mr. Hinton," I went on, slightly

excited, as I spoke, "is not only a gentleman, but an officer in the Royal Navy: and, with a vengeance, the way in which he has done his work through the hot months he has been in your service does credit to him. This I expect also will be kept secret; indeed, I know he would be annoyed were he aware that I had said so much as I have done."

"I promise you, Stretton——"

"Hold, Mr. Hinton," I said, interrupting him, "my name is Morton whilst in your service."

"Well then, Harry Morton, I again promise you to keep to myself all that you have told me. Now for business; I want all you shepherds to bring in your flocks this day week for counting out. You need have no fear with what we see before us, but I am going to send a thousand of the fattest to the sale-yards at Melbourne, and you, Harry, are to drive them. I shall see you well off, and will meet you at Pentridge, at six o'clock on the morning of the fifth day. You may warn the other shepherds that their flocks are to be brought in; but keep to yourself that I have chosen you to drive them down."

"I will do so, sir," I replied, delighted at the thought of the trip, and, strange to say, at the responsibility. "At what hour in the morning, and to which pen is each flock to go?"

"You will bring your flock to the house; the others, to the pens nearest their camping-ground. Now do not forget this. Here we are, Harry, close at home."

In ten minutes after the conversation I have related, Hinton and I were strolling leisurely towards his house; he had walked to meet me that day.

"Well, Harry, good night for the present," said he, as we approached the shepherds' hut; "I shall see you all by-and-by; but remember that you must be off early for Sanday River; I will bring you the letter, and should you see Miss C——, who has taken such a fancy to you, make up to her—she has money; and when she has confessed that she had never seen so nice a shepherd in her life as you, surely there can be but little doubt that you will succeed."

"All I can say, Mr. Hinton, in answer to what you tell me, is this, that no worldly inducement

could make me give myself, valueless as I am, away to such a very ugly mummy as your friend, Miss C——."

"Well, Morton, I only spoke as I thought, for your well-doing. Go you to your supper, and tell them all that I have said about the sheep."

Here we parted; he turned to his own house, whilst I walked straight up for the shepherds' hut.

The information that I gave to my *confrères* caused a great sensation; and all were more or less anxious to borrow some of my sheep, knowing that I had above my number; but I steadfastly refused all entreaties. I stood for once upon high ground, in the capacity of a herd, and determined I was to keep it.

After our supper was over Hinton entered our hut, and gave me the letter that I was to bear to Sanday Creek: he also told me to be off by daybreak, and named the horse that I was to ride. He did not long remain with us, and he had not gone many paces when he called out my name. On my inquiring what he wanted, he put a half-sovereign into my hand, telling me to get a good dinner at the inn at Sanday Creek—

an act of kindness, as it is well known that boundless hospitality awaits strangers in that country. I thanked him, and his little piece of gold followed the other little *douceurs* that I received, into my trousers pocket.

On my return to the hut I told Fullerton that I wished to speak to him. He immediately came out, when I at once confessed to him that I had made Hinton acquainted with his station in life, as well as my own. I told him that the secret was in safe keeping, and trusted that he was not annoyed at what I had done. In answer, he told me that he was not, provided it was not retold to the shepherds. On my assuring him that I had no doubt of Hinton's keeping his promise, he was satisfied.

"Now, Fullerton, old boy!" said I, as we wandered towards the river, "have you not got a pair of good jack-boots? I wish to borrow them, to make myself as neat as possible for my trip to Sanday Creek; and you may as well lend me that red sash of yours, and the stunning cabbage-tree that you walked up in, with the long black ribbon. Will you, old fellow?"

"With all my heart, Stretton," he replied; "you shall have all that I have got; but I think your jumper is better than mine. You can overhaul my kit, it is not as it used to be; but tell me, what did Hinton say when you told him who we were?"

"He said, Fullerton, that he had his suspicions some time back, as regards both of us, and, had he known Latin, he would undoubtedly have said 'Odi profanum vulgus:'—you know the rest. Oh, Fullerton! he is indeed a brick; and I have a sincere regard for our master. Ha! ha! ha!"

"You are right, Stretton, he is a good fellow; but we had better return to the hut, or else they will think that we are hatching something or another to our own advantage. You will want those things to-night: at what hour do you start?"

"At five; therefore you must give me my borrowed plumes before I return to my dray."

Having selected everything, at least to my satisfaction, we returned to the hut, when Fullerton brought out from a small inner room

a beautiful new Panama hat (not cabbage-tree), banded round with a broad black ribbon, whose ends would reach half-way down the back; next he produced a pair of excellent patent-leather jack-boots, which had seen but little wear; and lastly, a crimson silk sash, which had once graced the waist of a Californian. I was indeed well set up; and putting all under my arm, I was about leaving the hut, when the thought struck me that as he was the last comer, he might have perchance a shirt which had been got up by a laundress; for, to tell the reader the truth, all mine were washed by myself, and therefore only "rough dried."—I think that is the term. To my great delight he managed to find one, when with boundless thanks I took my lantern and hurried off to the shed, under which I had for so many weeks passed the night.

At daybreak the following morning I rose; and after a plunge in our dear little Running River, I dressed myself with as much care as a man could do without a looking-glass. The boots and hat fitted admirably, and when I had

stuffed my jumper with my trousers, and encircled my waist with the sash, I felt that I looked every inch a Mexican. Going to the stables, I saddled the dark bay mare, jumped on her back and rode to the hut, in hopes of parading myself before Fullerton. He was already up, making his preparations for the shepherds' breakfasts.

"You look uncommon stunning, Stretton," said he: "I envy you your day's holiday; but don't take a fancy to my boots and extend your ride to Melbourne."

Assuring Fullerton that I would safely bring back all that he had lent me, I cantered off with the same feeling that a schoolboy would have entertained on his getting a whole holiday and a horse to ride.

The mare I that day rode was not one of the two that gave me such a dreadful punishment down Dead-horse Gully, the evening of our first arrival at Sweetvale; she was a new purchase, and, like all Australian horses, knew but one pace,—a hand gallop.

The whole distance that I had to go, with

the exception of a mile and a half, was on turf; and delightfully was I carried to the inn, where I was ordered to inquire my way to Traquair (Scotch again), the residence of the gentleman whose sheep had so fortunately fallen into my hands.

It was an excellent house of call that I pulled up at; and after seeing the mare watered and fed, I entered the general room, in which I was pleased to find but few idlers.

I was superlatively happy that day; for once again I was really well dressed, and had a good horse under me. The reader may be sure that I had no mean opinion of myself, as I swaggered into the inn, and ordered some refreshment. The landlord, who was a civil fellow, gave me every information that I required, and also told me that it was a rare house for living to which I was bound. I remained for an hour at the inn, and at last found myself the only visitor. In the course of conversation I made inquiries as to the *young* ladies who were his nearest neighbours, the Misses Carpenter. He told me that one of them had ridden past the house that

morning, and that two of the men who had just quitted the room were her servants. The same strange account was given of the old maids that I had received from Hinton, and, in fact, they were the talk of the whole country.

I never felt more inclined for harmless mischief than I did that morning; and as I jumped on my horse, inwardly expressed a wish that I might meet one or the other of them in the course of the day: in fact I had half a mind to call at their house upon the plea that I had no matches. I have no doubt that the two glasses of brandy and water that I had taken had by no means lessened my stock of impudence.

Fortune favoured me, for as I reached the top of a slight hill, I saw not three hundred yards before me a lady on horseback.

Cantering on, I soon came near her, when I walked my horse past her, and as I did so, rose my hat; when to my delight I found that I was by the side of the lady who had expressed so favourable an opinion of myself.

"Good morning, shepherd," said she; "where are you off to this morning?"

I told her that I was bound for Traquair, to inform the master that we had a number of his sheep.

"Oh! by-the-by, you are the shepherd that found those sheep of mine, which have been missing for many months. I have, I assure you, the worst servants in the world: I do all I can to keep them up to their work; but no—they will do as they like; they cheat us, shepherd: not only are we robbed of our sheep, but my sisters and myself have no idea of what stock we have. And our bullocks are running wild, all through the bush."

"That must be the fault of your agent, ma'am," said I. "Why does not your stock-keeper drive them in twice a-year? How many stock-riders have you?"

"Two—but they are idle fellows, and spend half their time at that detestable public-house below. What an invaluable servant you must be to Mr. Hinton, shepherd."

"Hem!" I muttered, and wondered whether my master thought so.

"Fancy your finding so many lost sheep! I

am indeed obliged to you, shepherd. Now, will you accept this from me? (pulling out her purse); I intended to reward you the other day, but you went off so suddenly."

"No ma'am," I replied, "I am amply repaid by the thanks which you have given me. I will accept nothing; and I can only say that if there is anything I can do for you, command me. It strikes me that your servants take advantage of your single state; they would not dare to neglect your interests were there the eyes of a master over them. I wish I had the supervision of the lot—the lazy scoundrels!"

"Yes, shepherd, what you say is true: what is an establishment without a master?"

"You may well say that, Miss Carpenter," I replied; "and pray what is a man without a wife; a woman without a husband, on whose breast she may pour forth her inward thoughts, her sorrows, and her joys; oh! what is life without love?"

"Oh! shepherd, how you talk! have you loved too, and been unfortunate? I feel sorry for you. Perhaps you are a widower?"

"Yes, ma'am," (bewitched, I said aside).

"Do tell me, shepherd, how it was; I should like to hear all about it; in fact, you interest me."

"Miss Carpenter, pardon me the impertinence of the question; but did you ever love?"

"Oh! that is too much to ask of me. Shepherd, you rake up recollections which have for years lain dormant. You have touched upon a chord which re-echoes back sweet discourse of former days;—oh! say no more."

"You have loved, Miss Carpenter, and I know it. Perhaps the one on whom your youthful affections were fixed was false to you—the villain! but such is the world. Believe me, that which is called love between the sexes whose ages are under forty years, is phantasy; it is not real and lasting love—they do not know their own minds. It is now that I have reached the prime of life that I feel to what extent my whole heart could be given to the woman of my choice; the endless bliss that would attend a sanctified engagement with one of about my own years."

"You seem, shepherd, to have the power of

reading hearts; what made you think that I had ever loved?"

"Pardon me, Miss Carpenter, but is it likely that one resembling yourself could pass through life without causing one or more hearts to bleed? But I must away, and attend to my master's business. Good morning to you, Miss Carpenter, and pardon me if I have suffered my tongue to run too wild. I should not have dared to express myself thus freely, but you were so kind in your manner to me, you appeared to lose sight altogether of the great difference that existed between Miss Mary Carpenter and Henry Morton."

"How did you know, Mr. Morton, that my name was Mary?"

"Did I not see you at the sheep-pens? were you not on horseback? A woman never looks so well as when she is mounted. I confess, Miss Mary, I did make inquiries about you; I could not help it."

"Tell me, Mr. Morton, do you often come this way?"

"No, Miss Carpenter, my duties seldom bring me hither, but I frequently am at the border of

your run. Oh! that I were in your station of life that I might see more of one in whom I take such great interest!"

"Oh! Mr. Morton, I thank you sincerely for your kind expressions; I am sure any one might take you for a gentleman, and I for one should never be ashamed of owning you as a friend."

"Good morning, Miss Carpenter, (taking off my hat): you are now approaching your own residence, and it would never do for Miss Carpenter to be seen riding by the side of Henry Morton; but we shall meet again."

Still holding my hat in my hand, I was in the act of moving away, when she said, "Henry Morton, can you meet me this day week at the same hour and at the same place?"

"I will," I replied.

She then extended to me her gloved hand, which I took and kissed, and galloped off, ready to burst with laughter.

CHAPTER VI.

Reflections.—Return to the Shepherds' Hut.—My Flock above their Number.—The Meeting with Miss Carpenter.—Interesting Dialogue.—Indignation of the Lady.—Start for Melbourne with Sheep.—Coarse Jokes of the Shepherds.

LET not the reader put my conduct down as base; I knew the lady, and the next interview will prove how valuable would have been her affection.

I was not long reaching Traquair; the letter was delivered, and after partaking of an excellent dinner, I mounted my horse to return to Sweetvale. On passing the spot where I had taken leave of Miss Carpenter, I thought how different were my feelings at that moment to what I had felt at revisiting the scenes of former partings, where the heart was really and deeply interested. It was not until again reaching the inn that I remembered that that day week I should be on my way to Melbourne with the fat sheep. I felt half vexed that I had

agreed to meet Miss Carpenter, for conscience told me that I had no right to trifle with a woman, although she in truth was no longer young, and all that I had said had been uttered in a moment of fun. To meet her I then thought impossible, as Hinton had told me that the day which followed the counting out I should have to leave Sweetvale with the little choice flock. To write to her was impossible, for there was no post-office within fifteen miles, and that was Kilmore; so I satisfied my conscience by considering that all was for the best, and that there was an end to the loves of Mary Carpenter and Harry Morton. I arrived earlier than was expected at the station, delivered the letter to Hinton of which I was the bearer, fed my horse and made for the shepherds' hut.

Fullerton, with his usual thoughtfulness, had kept my supper warm, but which I refused, telling him that my holiday had indeed been *un jour de fête*, and that I had fared sumptuously. I kept as sacred all that had transpired between Miss Carpenter and myself, and only talked upon commonplace subjects. I felt how great

was the contrast as regarded my attire when I rose in the morning from my dray to dress, and could hardly believe that a change of clothes could make so great a difference in the outward appearance of a man. With a slight feeling of regret I returned the jack-boots, hat, and scarf, and in real shepherd's attire once again commenced my usual duties.

The eventful day for counting out arrived, and never did the sun shine brighter. All the shepherds had received their instructions, and with doubtful feelings each man drove his flock to his allotted pen. That day I had no fears, and to the house, according to my orders, I drove my splendid lot. My flock was the first counted over, and to my excessive joy was nearly four hundred beyond my number. Greatly pleased seemed Hinton, at the termination of that day's labour, to find that he was owner of upwards of five hundred and fifty sheep more than when he took possession of the estate of Sweetvale. There was a glorious merry meeting in the shepherds' hut that night, rendered doubly happy by the intimation I had received from

Hinton that I was not to proceed to Melbourne on the morrow.

"Yes," I said to myself, "I will meet Miss Carpenter to morrow. Hinton, I know, will give me leave to go to Kilmore, for I want a pair of boots." After that little soliloquy I waited patiently until the entrance of our kind master. Not wishing to let the other shepherds see that I was on such good terms with Hinton, I did not attempt to speak to him until he had quitted the hut, when I ran after him and boldly asked him to grant me leave for the day and permission to ride an old hack which was running loose in the paddock. The permission to go to Kilmore was granted immediately, and he kindly allowed me to ride the same mare that had borne me to Traquair. How happy did I, that evening, return to the hut with the idea of another holiday! It is true I felt pleased at the thoughts of keeping my appointment, but that any feeling of love was mixed up in my projected visit towards Sandy River I deny. It was at twelve o'clock that I had promised to meet Miss Carpenter, but fearing that something might occur

to stop my leave, I determined to start before even the shepherds were on the move: so stealing away unperceived, without even telling my friend Fullerton whither I was going, I went to my old quarters and tumbled into the bullock dray. Of course a supernumerary had orders to attend to my flock for the day, and all were aware that I had leave to go to Kilmore, ostensibly to purchase a pair of boots; but little did the ruffian crew believe that one of their order was on an expedition of love.

At sunrise I was in the saddle; but how different did I feel in my own clothes to those of the hut-keeper! All my Californian swagger seemed to have vanished with the boots. I had one consolation: she had the first time seen me in the dress that I was then wearing, and she had liked me: surely, I thought to myself, a pair of boots and a red sash will make but little difference. Although not pressed for time I rode at a good pace, and it was about an hour after my arrival that the family and visitors sat down to breakfast at the inn where I had that day week passed so much

of my time. The distance from the inn to the residence of the Misses Carpenter was two miles, but the house lay off the road: I therefore determined to walk to our trysting place, and thus avoid the encumbrance of a horse. At eleven o'clock I sauntered forth on one of the strangest enterprises that man ever undertook—nothing less than to make love to an old maid of fifty. Now, reader, think not that I look down upon old maids in general; far otherwise, for I know many who are most loveable, and I would not care had my fate been linked to one or another that I could name.

I reached the spot where Mary Carpenter and I had parted, but no one could I see. That I was to my time, is certain, and so sat myself down on a bank, from whence I could catch a slight glimpse of the home of the three graces.

An hour passed, and still no signs of the coming of my ladye-love. Tired with waiting, I lighted my pipe, and laid myself down amongst the fern, but keeping a good look-out on the road by which I knew she must come.

It was nearly two o'clock in the afternoon when I first espied my dulcinea; she was, as I expected, on foot. Slowly she came towards the appointed spot, ever and anon turning her head to see whether she was watched.

Naturally as desirous as Miss Carpenter was, that our meeting should be unseen, I rose from my hiding-place, and advanced to meet her. At first she did not appear to know me in my shepherd's dress, but when I came near to her I could see her face light up, and she offered me her hand with evident pleasure.

I now began to regret that I had suffered myself to be carried away by my innate love of frolic (which, indeed, has cost me dear enough), and by that ridiculous and selfish feeling of vanity, which never did any good in this world, and has been the ruin of thousands.

"You have kept your appointment better, Henry, than I have done; but the delay was not caused by me," were her opening words.

"I thank you, Miss Carpenter," I replied, "for addressing me by my Christian name; it

makes me feel more at ease whilst walking by your side; and allow me to apologize for meeting you in my shepherd's dress."

"Never mind your dress, Henry; it is not the dress that makes the man; but why did you not come as I last saw you?"

"I will be candid with you," said I: "the clothes that I had on this day week were not my own. I am glad to find that you have the discrimination to discern that fine clothes do not make the gentleman."

"Oh, Morton!" she exclaimed, looking me full in the face, "tell me—are you really a gentleman? do say that you are, and I will believe you."

"Miss Carpenter, I once was; Australia has made me what I am."

"Once a gentleman, indeed! I thought so, Morton, from the first, and something that I heard at Sweetvale almost confirmed my suspicions; but now your own confession has made me unutterably happy in finding that I have not thrown away my affections upon a common shepherd."

"You love me then, Mary?" I said, regarding her attentively.

"I do, Morton; and, poor as you are, I would marry you. I have thought over all that you said on the loves of boys and girls: you were right. No, Morton, it is not until one reaches the age of that which you and I are, that the heart really feels the full extent of its capacity. You are about fifty, Harry, are you not?"

"No; upon my soul I am not; but that makes little difference. I am about your own age, dear,— thirty-five. I guess, Mary, I have hit it off to a nicety; have I not, now?"

"Well, you are a clever fellow, Morton!" she replied, blushing, and playing with the ends of her long ribbons, which hung from a large brown straw hat. "You are very near it. I am just turned thirty-seven."

"I thought I was near right, Mary; and, if the matter could be managed, I see no reason why we should not become man and wife. But, Mary, listen: I am poor—very poor—and no

friends to assist me, and an alien from my country."

"I care not for that, Henry. I have money; a third of this large run is mine; that third is yours—say but the words that I shall become your wife."

Upon this she leant her head upon my shoulder, which made me feel exceedingly uncomfortable, and I fancy must, at the time, have made me look vastly ridiculous.

"I thank you, Mary, for your generosity, but there is much to be considered before you tie yourself up to a houseless wanderer."

"I care not what you have done in the old country; whether ticket-of-leave or not, I will marry you, Harry—I will."

For some time after the last little outburst we both sat thinking, when she suddenly said—

"What makes you so silent? Henry, tell me—why do you not speak?"

"I was thinking, Mary, that there was an obstacle to the consummation of your wishes."

"What obstacle, Morton? tell me! what

obstacle can there be? Am I not my own mistress? Is not the third of the property mine? Tell me, dear Henry, what obstacle can there be?"

"My wife; I am a married man."

"What!" she exclaimed, springing from her sitting position, and looking at me as if ready to sacrifice me to her vengeance. "You married! and is your wife here?"

"No," I replied, "my wife is not here; she is in England."

"Oh! that makes a difference, Morton," she said, as she resumed her seat by my side, and giving utterance, at the time, to a lengthened sigh, which appeared to do her an infinity of good. "That makes a difference. Then your wife is not in any of the colonies?"

"No, Miss Carpenter. I have said that my wife and my children are in England."

"What! and children too! you never said that you had any children, Harry; how wrong of you!"

"Why, Mary, you never asked me; but they too are in England."

There was an awfully long pause after I had thus unburdened myself, by the confession of belonging to the Benedictine order; and I was extremely anxious that my first and only love affair in Australia should be brought to a close. How to put an end to this ludicrous and somewhat disagreeable scene, I knew not; I therefore left it to Miss Carpenter to break the silence.

"I do not think, Henry," she at last said, looking at me with eyes sparkling with anything but anger, "that your being married would make much difference, as your wife is in England; and, if you would promise me never again to return to the old country, I would marry you still. Nobody would know anything about it, and we should be very happy. Our place is very comfortable, and there are few better runs than Bloomingdale between this and Melbourne."

This speech was indeed a poser to me, and effectually banished any little kindly feeling that I might have entertained towards her, and which sprang from a sense of my having carried the joke too far. The idea of a woman with good

means, offering to unite herself to a married man who had led her to believe that he was homeless, and an outcast from society, was to me the most unaccountable proceeding that I had ever met with. I was indeed in a fix, and wished myself anywhere but where I was; but how to get away was the difficulty.

"Have you nothing to say to the offer I make you, dear Henry?" she continued: "say, will you give up all idea of returning to the old country? Perhaps your time is expired, and you are again free? Tell me, I beg of you; will you make the promise that I exact?"

"Never," I said, rising from the ground, and fixing my eyes full upon hers, which at that moment by no means beamed with affection. "I love my children, and it takes much to obliterate entirely those feelings of love which first bound me to my wife. No, Miss Carpenter, I cannot make that promise; think no more of this meeting. You will find plenty who will be too happy to marry you, and will assuredly at last meet with one who will make a far better husband than Henry Morton, the shepherd!"

Miss Carpenter rose from the ground, and in a voice tremulous with rage, said, "Morton, you are a villain! You came here making love to me under the guise of a single man. You have barbarously tried to gain my affections, but you have not got them, you idle, skulking loafer!"

"I am no loafer, Miss Carpenter. I never sought your affections. Good morning." Saying this, I moved away.

Deigning no reply, she turned away towards her house, and I prepared to start for home. I never set eyes on her again.

With the utmost haste I made my way to the inn, mounted my horse, and galloped to Kilmore, to purchase the boots, to which intent I had borrowed the horse from Hinton.

It was not until late at night that I returned to Sweetvale, so great was the difficulty I had in making my way down "Dead-horse Gully."

For two days I followed my flock as usual, but the third found us all engaged in sorting the seven hundred fat wethers that I was to drive

down to Melbourne. I had received my instructions from Hinton; which were that I was to be five days on the road; that I was to be at "Ardvraik Castle" (an inn kept by a Scotchman) on the first night, and that there he would meet me; that the three following days I must depend upon my own choice of camping-grounds; but that on the morning of the fifth day I must be at Pentridge, seven miles from Melbourne, at six o'clock in the morning; when he would again meet me and accompany me to the sale yards.

I need scarcely state that I did not mention to a soul at our station my ever meeting with Miss Carpenter. I felt that it would have been a dastardly act on my part had I held her up to ridicule.

The eve of my departure for Melbourne arrived, when, according to Hinton's orders, I laid in my little stock of provisions, and nothing was forgotten by Fullerton that could conduce to my comfort.

"Do you know, Morton," said one of the shepherds, who was nicknamed Growler, and

who was a deserter from the Ninety-ninth regiment, and had served his fourteen years as a convict in Van Diemen's Land, "that you have got your work cut out for you with them sheep as you've got to drive? Don't think, my lad, that you've got any road-work: there arn't a bit of beaten track for you, until you come to the enclosed grounds, twenty mile from Melbourne. You're to go the short cut. Ha! ha! ha! We shall hear of another Hell's Hole affair with you, my lad, and no mistake: shan't us, Bill?" addressing another shepherd.

"I think as how we shall," replied the other worthy; "if he don't get himself eaten up with wild dogs. There's a power on 'em about there. You've never been the short road, have ye, Morton?"

"No," said I, "but I have no fear. Hinton would not have sent me with the sheep, knowing that I was less acquainted with the country than any one else, did he think that there was any danger; and if there is only water to be found, I——."

"Water be d—d!" bawled out old Growler; "you'll have mighty little of that; you'll be plaguy thirsty before you gets to Melbourne: won't he, Bill?"

"Ay, that he will," answered the other; "and if I was he, I'd go and lay my blessed self down on my blessed stomach, and drink to-night at the Running River for an hour, to lay in a stock like. You'll have enough of it—you'll have enough of it."

Making no reply to the coarse jokes of the shepherds, I left the hut, and went in search of Hinton, to ask him if he had any further instructions before I left, which I told him would be at sunrise.

Hinton merely asked me if I thoroughly understood my orders, and if my provisions had been given to me. Assuring him that I had everything that I required, I was leaving the house, when he told me to remain where I was for a minute. He then ran into the house, and brought me a small bottle of rum, which he told me to put between my blankets.

I thanked him, and returned to the hut. It was early that night when I turned into my dray to sleep—the last sleep that I was destined to enjoy at Sweetvale.

CHAPTER VII.

Start on my Journey.—My Journey with my Flock.—The Sheep Camp.—Sleep on the Plain.—The Sheep Stray.—Come up with them.—Apprehensions of Want of Water.—Hot Winds.—The Rocky Water Holes Dry.—Discover Water.—My Rest Disturbed by a Herd of Bullocks.—In Search of my Flock.—Impudent Demand by Mr. Mike Claverty.—Difficulty in getting my Flock over a Bridge.

LONG before sunrise the following morning I was up and dressed. I ran down to the creek, had a bath, and was ready to take my seat at the shepherds' table.

No sooner were all away, with the exception of Fullerton, to whom I was anxious to speak before leaving, than I commenced packing up my all, which was soon neatly strapped within my blankets and upon my shoulders. Shaking the hut-keeper by the hand, and offering to do anything I could for him at Melbourne, I went to the pens, loosened my sheep, and accompanied by old Jack started, like Don

Quixote, in search of fresh adventures; and indeed I had much to undergo before the city of Melbourne was reached.

As usual the day was lovely, and although my way lay through scrub, there was a track sufficient to point out my route. In the heat of the day my sheep camped, and whilst enjoying my dinner, Hinton rode up.

"Don't move, Morton," said he, as he saw me on the point of rising to take his horse as he dismounted; "you have done well, and will be at Ardvraik before sundown. I shall await you there: do not force the flock; let them feed as long as they will do. To-day I think you will find sufficient water; but to-morrow, I fear, will prove a day of some little trial; as all the creeks are dry until you reach the rocky water holes."

"The rocky water holes!" said I; "why, the rocky water holes are more than thirty miles from here; and I have only come about eight miles, I calculate, from the station."

"Don't be alarmed, Morton; I will give you every information as to your route this evening. When the sheep move, keep this track for about

two miles; you will then find another track which branches off to the right: mind, that is the road that you are to take. I shall leave you now, Harry, as I have to meet a gentleman at Ardvraik. Good-day, for the present;" and off he galloped on his favourite white horse.

"A pleasant prospect!" thought I, as I watched Hinton making his way among the trees, in a manner that would have astonished some of our best covert riders in England. "A comfortable forewarning," said I to myself, "of the troubles that I am to undergo to-morrow. What did he say? 'I think you will find sufficient water to-day, but to-morrow will, I fear, be a day of trial for you.' Pleasant this! It appears that I am doomed to suffer that most dreadful of all pangs—thirst. May God preserve me from such another night as that I passed in Hell's Hole!"

My flock began to stir; and repacking my little necessaries in my blankets, I was soon ready to follow them as they moved off to feed. Slowly and regularly they fed on at the rate of about two miles an hour; whilst I amused myself by picking the large globules of pink gum which shone

like rubies on the bark of the trees. This gum is not only most nutritious, but is well known to the aborigines as a very excellent remedy against dysentery, but one must not eat too much.

As the sun began to droop towards the horizon, I came upon a tolerably good beaten road; and soon afterwards I was pleased to see Hinton himself advancing towards me.

"Well done, Morton," said he, as he came up—"you have only one more mile to go; and as soon as the flock is settled for the night, there is a good dinner for you at the inn."

"Thank you, Mr. Hinton; but it is something to drink that I want, for in truth I am nearly choked, and the sheep are mad for water." The words were not out of my mouth two minutes, before the whole flock started off as if mad; the poor creatures had scented the water which was still some distance, and as I looked round at Hinton, he said—

"Harry, their noses are better than yours—the creek is on a-head."

The poor sheep could not have been more pleased at the thought of water than I was

of slaking the thirst which nearly drove me wild. On reaching the creek I laid myself down and drank to such an excess, that Hinton warned me of the consequences. I immediately took from my blankets the rum bottle, and quaffed about half a tumbler of the raw spirit.

"You have a queer way, Morton, of mixing your drink," said my master.

"Yes, sir, but a good way; for by so doing I get both liquids unadulterated," I replied.

Shortly afterwards we were in a large open plain, where, as the sun went down, the flock camped for the night.

"They are all safe enough, Harry," said my master; "you may come now and enjoy a good dinner: it is already ordered for you, and you may ask for whatever you want. But, Harry, you will have to sleep out with your sheep; remember, this ground is new to them."

"I was perfectly prepared to do so, Mr. Hinton," said I; "and, in such weather as this, I prefer the open air; I have only one night ever slept in the hut whilst in your service."

"What do you say, Morton?" he exclaimed,

never but one night! Where the deuce did you sleep, then?"

"In the bullock-dray, under the shed adjoining the stables," I replied.

"Well, Harry, you are indeed a queer fish."

In less than ten minutes afterwards, I was seated before as good a dinner as man could wish for at the Ardvraik Castle inn.

At eleven o'clock that night my faithful Jack and I left the inn for the open air to choose a spot whereon to rest our wearied bones. I met Hinton about a hundred yards from the house, who pointed in the direction where my sheep were settled down. He told me not to approach too near the flock, for fear of alarming them, as sheep are more readily disturbed when on ground unknown to them.

The moon was shining, and there was not a particle of wind: a more beautiful night I never saw. Unpacking my blankets, I laid one on the ground, pulled old Jack down to my side, and drew the other over both of us. For some time I watched the heavens, and thought that I had never seen the stars look so bright and so large as they did that night. That beautiful

constellation the "Southern Cross" was right above me, and caused thoughts which for a time drove all worldly ideas from my mind. Then I would think of home; and the forms of all those whom I had loved and had left would pass before me. Throwing off the blanket which covered me, I knelt down, and prayed that I might be spared to see all my relations again, and that the horrors of thirst might not fall on me before I reached Melbourne. Once again drawing the blanket over myself and dog, I laid myself down to sleep, and slept soundly for some hours, as I supposed; but I was awoke some time before daybreak by Jack's smothered growl and restless manner. At once I felt sure that the sheep were unsettled, but it was utterly useless attempting to move, for the moon which had shone so brilliantly when I laid myself down had set, and it was dark. Putting my arm round old Jack to prevent his leaving me, I again settled myself down, and was soon fast asleep. The sun was rising as I awoke; and my first thought was to look for my sheep, but to my dismay not one could I see. Springing on my legs, I strained my eyes in every direction,

when at a good distance off I saw something like a large grey lump of ground; Jack saw it too; it was the flock; they had been disturbed in the night. Without waiting to eat any breakfast, I packed up, strapped my blankets on my shoulders and hurried after them. The flock had fortunately gone in the direction that Hinton had pointed out for me to follow. So pleased was I in having found the flock, I thought little of my having nothing wherewith to quench my thirst, and I began to get a little uncomfortable. What was my delight when I had gone about two miles to find myself crossing a little creek whose water ran trickling over a rocky bed, and apparently tolerably pure. To my annoyance the sheep passed over the creek and took no notice of that element which they were destined to go without for the next twelve hours. Jack and I, however, had a good drink, when I pulled out the breakfast that I had made ready the previous evening after I had dined, and shared it with him—indeed, Jack always shared with me in the edibles, whatever I might have.

At about twelve o'clock in the day, Hinton

came up with me: he praised me for my attention, and gladdened my heart with another small bottle of spirits.

"Did the sheep drink at the creek, Harry?" he asked.

"No, they did not," I replied.

"I am sorry for that, Morton, for you will see no water until you get to the rocky water holes, and I have known them dry."

"And how far, Mr. Hinton, am I now from these rocky water holes? Why I shall be dead or mad before I get there!"

"No, Harry, you will be all right presently; there is a sort of an inn about six miles further on, where *you* can get something to drink, but the sheep will get nothing—the man has to haul his water from the creek you passed over this morning. But I must get on: mind, Harry, you are to be at Pentridge on Friday morning at six o'clock." With that he spoke to his horse and galloped off.

Delightful prospect before me, thought I: no water for my sheep until the rocky water holes are reached, and the *chance* of something for myself six miles hence; and after that, God only knows when.

With disagreeable forebodings of coming difficulties, I continued my monotonous walk after the flock, and in course of time reached the inn, which was a most wretched place.

From the time that I had left Ardvraik the appearance of the country seemed totally changed; not a tree was there to be seen; one vast track of undulating prairie ground seemed to stretch before me to an interminable length.

My flock camped, as Hinton had told me they would do, on that plain: no shelter from the rays of the sun could they find, no prospect of water was there for many miles.

On reaching the inn I asked for some spirits and water, which I drank off, and then made inquiries as to there being water nearer than where I hoped to pass the night.

I was told that I should not find a drop between the creek that I had passed in the morning and the rocky water holes, and that it was very doubtful if they were not dry, owing to the long drought. This information rendered me very miserable; and yet I did not think that Hinton would risk the lives of seven hundred fat sheep.

It was the month of March, and one of those

autumnal days when you may expect the ever-to-be-dreaded hot winds which come from the north, and are called brick-fielders, from the clouds of dust which they raise. All animal and vegetable nature is then more or less prostrated; and frequently have I seen forest and prairie for miles in one blaze, greatly increasing the already intense heat of the atmosphere.

From the inn I could see my sheep all huddled together taking their accustomed rest, if rest it could be called. During the time that they were off their feed I remained at that wretched place; for I there could find shelter from the sun for myself and dog; and during that time I paid one shilling for two pannikins of water for old Jack.

About two o'clock my wretched flock began to move, when I left the inn to steer them towards the rocky water holes.

There certainly must be something wonderfully nutritious in the grasses of the colony of Victoria, for that on which we trod was burnt up to a cinder; and yet sheep, provided they have plenty of water, will get immensely fat upon that apparently sapless herbage.

Mile after mile had I followed my charge, who fed on at the rate of about two miles an hour, without seeing any one, when I fell in with a horseman; he came towards me, and as he passed I asked him whether there was any water at the rocky holes. The only answer the wretch gave me was, "Go and see."

The coward was on horseback, or he would not have dared to give such an answer to a civil question.

Jack and I had managed up to that time pretty well, having been refreshed; but my poor sheep were suffering dreadfully, and I did not know whether I was a long distance from, or close to the much-desired spot. One more hour brought me to some rising ground, and from thence I could see beneath me, at about half a mile distance, a creek. With a heart fluttering between hope and fear, I forced my flock on towards that which I had been led to believe was a perfect oasis in a desert, trusting to repay them for the hours of toil that they had suffered under such a burning sun. We reached the creek of the rocky water holes—it was dry! every hole was dry! The poor animals ran

about wildly, searching every hole; but no: neither up nor down was there water to be found. Half frantic, I knew not what to do; and in two hours the sun would set. It was nearly an hour before I succeeded in driving the sheep over the rocky bed of the little river; old Jack, too, appeared equally knocked up, and my thirst was becoming intolerable. At last all were driven over; and we continued our route, following the track, which became every mile more decided.

About half an hour before sunset a horseman overtook me, who upon inquiry told me that I should perhaps find water for the sheep at a spot he pointed out. The hole indicated lay a little out of my track, but considered as nothing; he also told me that I was approachng the enclosed grounds, and that I might get into trouble if I went on that night much farther. He said that I was then very near to the main road; and that a little further on I should find a refreshment tent; and at last he advised me to camp somewhere near to the spot where I then was.

To my great delight I found water at the hole I had been guided to, if indeed water it could

be called. Nevertheless, Jack and the sheep managed to quench their thirst with the filthy slimy element. Thirsty as I was, I could not pour such abomination down my throat.

No sooner had the flock refreshed themselves than I sought a spot whereon to camp for the night. I was approaching too near to the enclosed ground, and yet anxious to work my way on towards the tent where I trusted to find something to quench my own thirst.

At last the sun went down, and the flock settled themselves to rest. I watched my charge for some little time, and indeed until it was nearly dark, there being little or no twilight in that country, when I walked as fast as I could towards the enclosed grounds, at the entrance to which I found the refreshment tent, which I entered.

The first thing that I did was to call for two bottles of ginger-beer, which I poured into my pannikin and drank off. The proprietor of the abode had the impertinence to demand eighteen pence for that. I afterwards asked him if he would give me some water for my dog, which he refused, at first; but afterwards his heart became

softened, seeing poor Jack's eyes fixed upon my face, whose looks told too plainly that he had by no means satisfied the cravings of nature with the abominable stuff that he had lapped, by sparing me a pannikin of water, for which I paid sixpence, but no entreaties of mine could extract another sixpenny-worth of the pure liquid for my dog. I found that my journey from that spot would lay for miles through enclosed grounds and along the main road to Melbourne.

Purchasing two more bottles of ginger-beer, for which I had to pay two shillings and sixpence, one shilling of which was to be returned to me when I brought the man his bottles back, I quitted the hut to make my bed somewhere near to my flock. It was too dark to see them, so I spread my blankets about two hundred yards from the ox fence. I was soon fast asleep, and so was Jack; and we must have slept well until about one o'clock in the morning, when I was awoke by the loud cracking of stock whips, and the bellowing of apparently a large herd of bullocks. It was too dark to see anything, and what to do I knew not: that the

whole herd were approaching where I then was, I was certain, and, fearing to be trampled to death, I seized my blankets and as many of my valuables as I could, and retraced my way to the ox fence, which I got through, and where I determined to pass the rest of the night. I was in an awful state of mind about my sheep; as the cracking of the whips and the holloaing was quite enough to drive them in all directions without the addition of a large herd of bullocks going over them.

At last the men and beasts came past me, and in ten minutes more the whole herd were safely lodged within the same enclosure that I had sought shelter. To attempt to look after my sheep would have been utterly useless, so I spread my blanket under the lowest bar of one of the rails and laid myself down until break of day.

The night was very sultry, and the wind, which seemed inclined to rise, was still blowing from the north, which did not promise favourably for a comfortable twenty-mile journey on foot behind a flock of seven hundred sheep. I had not much sleep for the rest of that night,

my brain being racked and tormented with the thoughts of coming troubles; every now and then expecting to find a bullock's hoof close to my head, who would put his nose down to see what was there, and then gallop away like a mad animal.

With the first streaks of morning's light I commenced arranging my blankets, when I found that I had everything with me but my quart pot. I then knelt down, and fervently were my petitions to Heaven offered up for protection through the trials that I felt awaited me that day. After drinking about a wine-glass full of rum, I shouldered my blankets, and before it was really light went in search of my sheep. For an hour I wandered about the plain on which they had camped, but no vestige of a sheep could I see: I even found my missing quart pot, so narrowly did I search the ground for tracks to indicate the direction they had taken. At last, to my dismay, I found unmistakeable proofs that my flock had made for the enclosed grounds. Determined to find the sheep, I followed this track, and at about a mile from where they had

camped, I first caught sight of them just as the entire flock were moving off to feed.

With a heart overflowing with gratitude, I rendered Heaven thanks. The enclosed grounds which I have alluded to were wooded, having been only partially cleared. They had been purchased from the Government, and very tenacious the owners of those new purchases were.

As I rose from my knees, I saw three men coming towards me from a small brake, where they must have been for some time, with the express purpose of finding out the owner of the sheep. I stood to receive them.

The first who spoke, and who turned out to be the master, said that he was under the necessity of taking my flock to the pound until twopence per head was paid for their night's pasturage.

I denied his power to enforce that demand, and told him to whom the flock belonged, saying that I should meet my master on the following morning, and that if he by force took my sheep from me, he would have to take a fearful responsibility on himself. I explained to him

how it happened, and finally told him that I considered the whole transaction as cowardly, being, as I was, only one to three.

"Well, mate, I have listened to you," said he; "now hear me. I have the power, I tell you, to drive this flock to the pound; but if you will give me one of your sheep, I'll say no more about the matter."

At this I began to consider. Hinton, I remembered, had told me to sell, if I could, and had given me a price, which was fifteen shillings a-head. "I will do so," I said; "but I expect that you will give me a receipt for that sheep, which you can have no hesitation in doing if your claim is just, and it will prove to my master that I have acted properly."

As the last words were spoken, I remembered I had no pencil with me; and that it was more than doubtful whether he had anything with him by which to acknowledge the theft that he had made.

"Have you a pencil with you?" said I.

"No, mate: we don't carry pencils about with us in this country," he replied, "but I'll give you my name. This run is mine, ain't it

Tom? (the man he addressed nodded assent), and there is no man better known in the colony than Mike Claverty of Dolvane."

"Then your name is Mike Claverty of Dolvane?" I said.

"Yes," answered the scoundrel.

"I shall not forget to tell Mr. Hinton that Mr. Mike Claverty has by force taken one of his sheep. Now follow me, and you may choose one."

With that we all four started after the sheep, which were feeding beautifully, and luckily for me in the direction that I wished them to go.

Jack, who was a most perfect sheep-dog, required but few hints to round the sheep and get them closely packed together, so that Mr. Claverty might rush in and seize any one that he might choose.

The flock were soon formed in one compact lot, when Claverty himself rushed in and seized the fattest that he could find. Again telling him that I should hold him answerable for what he had done, with the assistance of my faithful dog I drove the flock towards the road which would take me to Melbourne. The heat and the dust

were most distressing; the soil was of a reddish hue, and the dust, which caked upon my face, gave me the appearance of a Red Indian.

I had proceeded on my way about eight miles when I came to a bridge, the first bridge certainly that any of my flock had ever seen; and at the distance of about four hundred yards I could see buildings, and, apparently, one of no mean pretensions. At that bridge I was nearly driven wild; not a sheep would attempt to cross, in spite of all the noise I made and the worrying that old Jack gave the whole flock. There I was, indeed, fixed; the wind, which had considerably increased, drove the dust up in such clouds that sometimes the bridge itself was obscured. Still did I try to force the animals across, half choked, and suffering from the heat. But no, they would not face that bridge, and, exhausted, I flung myself down upon the ground.

I had not been on the ground five minutes when I rose, determined to make one more attempt to drive the frightened flock across the river. Calling Jack to my assistance, I was wonderfully astonished to find that he did not answer to my well-known call. Again, and

again did I call out Jack's name; but no Jack came bounding to my side, and at last the truth flashed across me that my dog had deserted me. Driven wild, and almost to desperation, I whooped and holloaed; not a step over the bridge would a single sheep take. Wilder again did I holloa to my flock, when, to my joy, I thought I heard old Jack's voice. Again and again did I call "Jack! Jack!" when, to my astonishment, a sheep-dog (but not my old Jack) rushed at the sheep; in a minute he had some of my flock half across the bridge; calling him back I sent him after my stragglers, which he soon brought in, and in less than five minutes my unexpected friend had safely driven the entire flock over the bridge. In the hour of need my prayers had been answered!

CHAPTER VIII.

A Valuable Sheep-Dog.—Refreshment for Self and Dog.—Camp by the Yarra Yarra.—Fearful Storm of Wind.—Lose my Hat.—Sheep Safe.—Letters from England.—Visit Friends at Collingwood.—Sheep Unsold.—The Sheep Scattered.—Strange Sleeping-Room.—A Gaunt Visitor.—Altercation with him.—Agree to Drive the Sheep Home.—A Trick.

WHOEVER was the owner of that dog I never knew; he was a splendid specimen of the Scotch collie, and from that moment he became my property until claimed.

Desirous as I was to enter the inn that I shortly afterwards came to, I would not, so fearful was I of losing the animal which had so opportunely come to my assistance. Ransacking my wallet to see what I could find of meat to give my new sheep cur, on whom I had already bestowed the name of "Lucky," I fortunately put my hand upon a piece of beef, the remains of that which I had cut off after my dinner at Ardvrach. Holding the tempting morsel in my

hand, I caressed him, and in a moment saw that he was a young dog, and half feared that he might leave me as suddenly as he had volunteered his services.

Mile after mile we drove the flock before us; the wind had risen considerably, and there was every appearance of my having to encounter one of those fearful tornadoes with which the northerly winds generally vanish.

At two o'clock in the afternoon I was much pleased at finding myself at the same inn where I had, on my way up to Major Blois's, inquired the way to Pretty Sally's Hill, only seven miles from the spot where I had parted from Edward Carroll and his brother Dick. My heart beat quicker as I thought of my young friends; and I wondered whether I should hear anything of them as I passed through the Government works.

For a moment I ran into the house, closely followed, to my great delight, by my new dog. My inquiries as to whether Hinton had gone by were answered in the affirmative; and I was told that he had left an order for me to have whatever I liked, should I call. Ordering a

glass of weak brandy and water for myself, which I drank off, and placing a bucket of the pure liquid before the dog, I lighted my pipe, and was in the act of starting, when the landlord of the inn told me that he was authorized by Mr. Hinton to take three sheep from the flock. I agreed that he should do so, if he paid the money down. He was quite agreeable, and with me he went after the flock. Some little time was lost in getting the flock together and in his making his selection; but after a time, I was once again fairly on my road towards Melbourne. At five o'clock that evening, I passed through the Government works, but nothing could I hear of Carroll and his brother. I remember the very spot, as I passed, where we had parted, and began conjecturing what might their lives have been during the time that we had been separated. At sundown, that evening, I camped once again on the banks of the Yarra Yarra River; and my prognostications were verified, as to an approaching storm, which that night raged furiously.

I had procured a good supper at the inn at which I had stopped; and at the foot of a gum-

tree my fire was burning cheerily, being sheltered from the wind; my old quart pot was boiling on the fire, and, in fact, I had made every arrangement possible to pass as comfortable a night as the wind would permit. Lucky, the dog, had evidently become attached to me; and he seemed perfectly satisfied with his change of masters. At about eight yards' distance from where my fire was burning, stood a fine tall tree of many hundred years' growth; under that I made my bed. I could distinctly hear the low cough which now and then came from the flock; and had it not been for the fearful wind, there could not have been a quieter or a sweeter spot. By the light of the fire I for some time watched the trees as they rocked to and fro; and I felt by no means easy as to one tall and evidently dead old stringy bark, which gave unmistakable signs of coming down that night. I was quite aware that it would not fall my way, but yet I felt nervous about it. Sitting with my back against the tree I had selected, and with my new dog by my side, under the blanket, I watched, pipe in mouth, the battle of the elements. One other night only did I ever know in Australia to equal

the night of which I am now writing; and that was the night when, in Canvas Town, the tents were blown up into the air, and my young nephew nearly lost his horses. Having finished my pipe, I made up a good fire, the embers of which I felt certain would be alight when day dawned. I then returned to my blankets, and laid myself down by the side of Lucky, who had never moved. I could not resist watching that tall tree, which I expected was destined that night to fall: each way that it rocked it cracked, and at last it did come down majestically. Naturally fearful lest a branch might strike me, I jumped up, and ran some yards behind the tree under which I intended sleeping; when a gust of wind caught my hat and carried it away so far that I could not recover it. "Well," said I to myself, "this is my usual good luck—yes; it is all of a piece. I wonder what to-morrow will bring forth." I returned to my bed, and Lucky, who had never left me, appeared delighted once again to nestle under the blankets.

For some time I could not compose myself to sleep; I recalled to memory the numberless trying situations that I had been placed in, and

the many almost miraculous deliverances I had received at the hand of Providence.

"Yes," said I to myself, "heaven has indeed supported me, and again will I return my thanks and pray for further blessings." Creeping from under my blanket, I offered up my thanksgivings that night, in, I am sure, a devout spirit.

When I awoke in the morning, the wind had in a great measure died away. I had ampletime before the flock moved to make a hearty breakfast; and in two hours' time I was to meet Hinton at Pentridge. The only drawback to my perfect serenity was the loss of my hat; but I trusted at Pentridge to be enabled to make good my loss.

It was a beautiful morning; the hot winds still blew, and the dust rose in dense clouds, which frequently caused my flock to be lost to all sight. Having no handkerchief to tie round my head, my long hair necessarily was blown about in all directions; and, what with the perspiration and dust upon my face, I must indeed have appeared a pretty figure when I met Hinton, which I did at seven o'clock that morning.

"Well done, Harry!" said he, as he cantered up to me, which he did within half a mile of

the township of Pentridge; "you have kept your time well; but where is your hat?"

"Blown away, sir," said I, "but I hope to purchase one presently. There is a shop at Pentridge, I know; for I bought a haunch of mutton there, as I was on my way up to Major Blois's."

"I'll go and get you a hat, Morton; you shall not pass through Pentridge bare-headed; come on quietly with your sheep." Saying that, he turned his horse's head, and galloped back to the township.

In less than ten minutes my master was back again, carrying in his hand a new brown wide-awake hat, which he handed to me, and which fitted me capitally.

"Upon my word, Morton, you look first-rate, now," said he, laughing; "and had you but a decent suit of clothes, and a clean skin, you might pass for a gentleman."

"I thank you for the compliment, Mr. Hinton, and I trust that, if we are successful at the yards, that you will spare me for a few hours, to get a new rig out and a bath; for I am literally begrimed with mud all over."

"Certainly, Morton; and here"—leaning over his horse as he spoke, and putting three sovereigns into my hand—"take this. I do not mean to deduct this sum from your wages. I give it to you as a present. Now, tell me, Harry, do you think that you have got all your sheep?"

"All, sir—I will swear to it—but four," I replied, "three I sold at the inn, and one was taken from me by force."

"By force! what do you mean, Morton?"

I then recounted to him everything connected with the impudent demand made upon me by Mr. Claverty, of Dolvane, and which, it appeared, was a downright act of felony. However, Mr. Hinton told me that I had done wisely, and seemed satisfied with me in every way.

At last we arrived at the sale-yards, which are situated about half a mile from the city: in ten minutes the sheep were all penned, and I was on my way to Melbourne, with my dog Lucky.

My first thought was to purchase an entire new suit of digger's clothes, and with them under my arm, I went to the baths. After luxuriating in the warm water for half an hour,

I dressed myself in my new habiliments, went to the barber's, and, finally, to a restaurateur's, where I had as good a breakfast as money could procure.

Mr. Hinton had, on my parting from him, expressed a wish to see me again at four o'clock that afternoon, at the sale-yards. He told me that he did not anticipate any more trouble as regarded the sheep; but that I might have some still left upon my hands. This intimation was rather a drawback to my holiday, for I intended asking for two or three days' leave.

As soon as I had finished breakfast, I made my way to the offices of Messrs. Westby and Company, in Flinder's Lane, the firm to whom my letters from England were consigned. I have before stated with what anxious feelings I invariably entered the office of those gentlemen, and that morning more so than ever. Some three or four letters only were handed to me; but the superscriptions were sufficient; no one of my family was lost to me.

Numerous questions were put to me as to how I had got on at the diggings, and where I had been; but I got rid of all interrogatories

by saying that I had done no good, and "only made wages," a cant term among the diggers when they are doing badly.

Leaving the offices of my friends—for friends they eventually proved to me—I went, accompanied by Lucky, to a little inn, called the "Black Boy," where I asked permission to sit down in some private room, to read my letters. My request was immediately acceded to, and for half an hour I was happily employed in perusing those missives from home, which told me of the well-doing of those who were dearest to me.

One of the letters that I had received was from my brother, with the usual duplicate; and to the Union Bank I next bent my steps, and where I hoped to hear something of my friends the Carrolls.

I was much hurt, upon asking the question if it was known whether they were in Melbourne or at the diggings, to be told that nothing was known of them. They said that money was then lying in the bank to their credit, and that for upwards of five months neither of the brothers had been seen at the bank.

I was perfectly bewildered, for I felt certain

that neither Edward nor his brother ever suffered their duplicates to remain long uncashed; and what to think I knew not.

It was but one day's long walk from Melbourne where we had parted, and where they intended to try their young hands at Government work; and I determined to go to Collingwood before I rejoined Hinton at the sale-yards, and learn, if possible, what had become of my young friends. Thinking that I should probably hear of the Carrolls at the house of my friend Lewis, I started as fast as I could walk to Cambridge Street, Collingwood. As I passed by the Unitarian chapel where poor Edward had made his bed the night he had left me, and as I thought unkindly, when the horses knocked down our tent, I could not resist stopping, from astonishment at finding what could be done in four short months. Not a hundred yards apart stood four edifices, all raised, or being erected, for public worship. St. Peter's, which had for many years stood alone between Melbourne and Collingwood, had then a Scotch church, a Roman Catholic cathedral, and an Unitarian affair as neighbours,—the Papal edifice being the

only one unfinished; and so close were they that I verily believe I could have thrown a stone from St. Peter's Church to have hit either of the other buildings. Upon calling at my friend's house I was informed by Mrs. Lewis that nothing had been heard of the brothers since our departure, but that it was believed by some that they had both gone to Van Diemen's Land. She also told me that her husband was at the diggings. Mrs. Lewis kindly begged that I would stay and have something to eat, and wondrously astonished was she when I refused, telling her that I had no time for dinner, for that my master was expecting me.

"What on earth do you mean, Mr. Stretton, by saying that your master is expecting you?" she said in an excited manner; "it would sound well in Wales that Mr. Charles Stretton, formerly of Llangoed Castle, was in service in Australia. No, no, I will not, Mr. Stretton, and I cannot believe it."

"It is quite true, Mrs. Lewis, that I am at this moment a gentleman's shepherd," I replied, "and have as good a master as ever breathed, but my time is nearly up, and I shall be down

again. God bless you, Mrs. Lewis, and your little ones! I have not forgotten the many acts of kindness that I have received within these walls. Tell me, Mrs. Lewis, do you know what has become of our old friend, Cohen, the Jew?"

"No, I do not," she answered, and I could see that her eyes were dimmed with tears at seeing me brought down, as she thought, so low in the social scale; "nor do I wish to hear anything of him, for I know that he robbed poor dear Mr. Carroll."

"I do not know whether he exactly robbed Edward, but that he never paid him his thirds I am certain, for I had an interest in that. Why, he never would have got rid of his gimcrack pebble finery, if it had not been for Edward and myself."

"No, indeed, and many a time have my husband and I laughed over the scenes that we ourselves have witnessed during the time that Mr. Carroll and you were staying in Collingwood. I wish you well, sir: my husband will be pleased to hear that I have seen you, and that you are likely to return to Melbourne."

Saying that, she left the room, and I, taking

a short cut, and avoiding the City of Melbourne, made my way to the sale-yards to meet my master. When I reached the pens I found to my annoyance that Mr. Hinton had not arrived; and that annoyance was not lessened by finding that three hundred of the sheep remained unsold. In about half an hour my master made his appearance, and after complimenting me upon having a clean face and a new suit of clothes, he said: "Morton, I am sorry to say that nearly three hundred sheep remain in the pens unsold, and you will have to take them this evening over Richmond bridge to some enclosed grounds belonging to Sutherland and MacFarlane, the brokers; a young man will meet you by the inn on the opposite side of the bridge and point out the spot where, I am sorry to say, you must remain until they are disposed of."

Disgusted as I was, hoping that my labours were over, I yielded, apparently, a ready assent, and began to unpen the sheep.

"You will be very well taken care of, Morton, where you are going to," and with marked emphasis he said, "Harry, come back to Sweetvale directly that your charge is taken from your

hands. You will want for nothing whilst you are away; attend to my sheep, Morton, and I shall thank you."

I promised Hinton to do my best to further his interests, and without hinting that I might perhaps never return to Sweetvale, started for Richmond bridge.

The distance from the sale-yards to Richmond was about two miles and a half, and I had my fears whether or no I should succeed in driving my sheep across a bridge of such an elevation. All went well until I reached that part of Collingwood where St. Peter's Church, and the three other sacred edifices, were situated, when I saw two ladies approaching, one of whom suffered her parasol to slip from her hand, which the wind carried right into the midst of my little flock.

Never having seen such a thing before, the sheep scattered in all directions, and one in its fright ran against my legs, and laid me flat upon my back. The first thing that I did on regaining my upright position was to go after the parasol, which I soon got possession of, and then giving Lucky the nod to gather the animals

together, I advanced to meet the ladies, to whom I handed the small canopy.

"I hope you are not hurt, shepherd," said one of the ladies; "take this, it will keep you on your way. I am very much obliged to you."

I tendered my hand, and found that her liberal ideas were of no great extent; she gave me a shilling.

At last Richmond bridge was reached, and I saw at once that the same troubles awaited me from which I had suffered when Lucky so opportunely came to my assistance.

After screaming and holloaing until I was hoarse, and the most extraordinary exertions by my dog, I was nearly giving up, when a man came up to me, and said—

"What will ye give, if I carry one on 'em over the bridge? I'se be an old shepherd myself."

"I will give you half a crown," I replied, and proceeded at once to round my flock, so that he might seize one, which he immediately did, and put upon his shoulders, dropping him, however, when little more than three parts across. No sooner did the flock see

one of themselves on the bridge, than they all passed over without further trouble. It was with great good-will that I gave the man half a crown, for it is probable that I should never have succeeded in getting them across without his assistance.

Whilst talking to the man, a gentlemanly young fellow, mounted on a very tidy hack, came up to me; he told me that he was sent to show me where I was to remain until the disposal of the sheep. He said that my quarters would be very bad, being nothing but a stable attached to an old boiling-down establishment; he said that he thought the smell from the slaughter-houses would not be very offensive, as nothing had been done in the boiling line since the gold discovery, and he was certain that Mr. Sutherland would do all he could to make me very comfortable.

I could not refrain from smiling as I listened to the young man; and burst out laughing when he told me that I should be made very comfortable whilst sleeping in a stable attached to a slaughter-house.

It was getting dark when we reached the

enclosed grounds, where I was destined to remain for some days, and where I found Mr. Sutherland, the broker, awaiting me. He had a man with him, who I was glad to see carried a large basket on his arm, which I felt certain contained my supplies.

Mr. Sutherland and the others assisted me in driving the sheep into a railed enclosure, also adjoining the slaughter-house, and which was done with some difficulty, for the smell that greeted their olfactory nerves was most offensive. It is true that the stable had been swept out, and a bundle of clean straw had been placed in a corner, but it was not until I had looked at the contents of the basket that I felt at all satisfied with my quarters.

"Shepherd," said Mr. Sutherland, "this is a poor place for you to sleep in, but it is for a day or two, and my man Sandy will bring you every morning the same provisions, and if there is anything more that you want, say what it is, and you shall have it."

I thanked him, and told him that I would put up with much more to oblige Mr. Hinton, but that I trusted the sheep would soon be sold.

He told me that he would do his best to get them off my hands, and left me. I certainly had no fault to find with the provisions, for literally nothing was forgotten. In the basket I found cold meat, ham and eggs, fresh bread, wine, brandy, and tobacco.

Strewing the clean straw under the manger I made my bed, and then commenced my supper. I found it rather inconvenient having nothing to sit on, and so, like Lucullus of old, I took my supper reclining.

On the morning of the sixth day after my becoming an inhabitant of the slaughter-house, a tall gaunt man, mounted on a horse very much resembling himself, visited me. Accosting me in anything but civil terms, he informed me that he had purchased the sheep, and that I was to drive them five miles on the road to Dandenong.

I told him that I should obey no orders but those of Mr. Hinton or of his agent, Mr. Sutherland.

"You cursed, insolent, scoundrel!" he said, shaking a stock whip at me at the same time; "will you obey my orders?"

"No," I replied, "I will see you at the bottom of the sea first. You are the insolent scoundrel, not I; and if you will throw away your stock whip and get off your horse, I think I can manage to take a little of your low Irish bounce out of you. I tell you that I will not give a sheep up until Mr. Sutherland comes here himself. You have not far to go; and old raw bones will carry you up to the house in quick sticks."

Looking daggers at me, the bullying fellow struck his wretched horse over the head and cantered off to the pretty residence of Sutherland the sheep broker.

In less than half an hour Mr. Gallacher (for that was the name of the purchaser of my sheep) returned with a note, which he handed to me; it was from Mr. Sutherland, and to this effect—

"DEAR SIR:

"Will you have the kindness to accompany Mr. Gallacher, who has purchased the sheep, three miles on the road to Dandenong, as you have a good dog, and he has none. I have no

authority for asking you to do this; but I assure you that Mr. Hinton will be pleased by your acceding to my wishes.

"Yours truly,

"ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND."

"That is enough," said I, as I tore the letter in pieces; "in five minutes I shall be ready to go with you."

A shepherd's wardrobe is soon packed; and in less than that time I was once again tramping after my reduced flock along as dusty a road as mortal ever travelled. However, I solaced myself with the recollection that it was but three miles that I had to go, and that as far as my finances went, I was every inch a gentleman. There was one thing which appeared to me unaccountable, and which was the extraordinary change in the manner of Mr Gallacher towards me. Instead of addressing me in the bullying manner with which he had introduced himself, he was all gentleness, and I could plainly see that there was some motive for his altered conduct.

On reaching the Yarra Yarra inn, distant

three miles from whence we started, I stopped; entering the house, I called for some beer, and which Gallacher, whilst sitting on his horse, called loudly out that he would pay for. I allowed him to do so; and the extent of his liberality reached the sum of one shilling. I hope the reader will not think that I drank two quarts of that homely beverage; far from it, for beer was sixpence the glass.

On reaching a certain spot which I guessed to be about five miles from the boiling-down establishment, I pulled up, telling Mr. Gallacher that I should go no farther. Instead of attempting coercive measures, in the mildest of accents the scoundrel couched his request that I would proceed *only* two more miles, and at the same time hinted how generously he intended to treat me for the services of myself and dog.

Like a simpleton I yielded to his entreaties; but not for the sake of lucre did I agree to drive the sheep to where he said he expected to meet his shepherd, and who would relieve me of my labours; no! what I did was done for the sake of Hinton.

After we had gone about a mile, Gallacher

told me that he would canter on and meet his servant; and he said that my troubles would soon be ended. I was indeed pleased to get rid of his hated presence, but little did I then suspect the trick the scoundrel was playing me.

CHAPTER IX.

Clash of Flocks Prevented.—Mr. Gallacher of Dandenong.—A Quarrel and a Fight.—Reckoning with Mr. Gallacher.—Leave Mr. Hinton's Service.—Weary Life at Collingwood.—Offered a Theatrical Engagement.—A Right Welcome Letter.—Government Employment Recommended.—Appointed to an Office under Government.—Take Possession of my New Quarters.—My Duties.

THE two miles were got over, but no signs could I discover of the owner of the sheep that I so foolishly had suffered myself to be entrapped into driving. Hour after hour passed and no signs of Mr. Gallacher; when at last I saw at some distance before me a great cloud of dust. In a moment I knew that it was a flock of sheep approaching, and that I was bound to give them a very wide berth; for had my little lot run into them great indeed would have been the trouble to both parties.

Driving my sheep off the road to a considerable distance, in order to avoid a clash, I was sur-

prised to see a mounted shepherd galloping through the scrub towards me. He thanked me for having got out of the way, and said that they had three thousand before them. He also told me that they had remarked the dust that arose from my flock, and were fearful lest a meeting might have taken place.

"To whom do those sheep belong, mate?—they are a nice little level lot," he asked, as he was about leaving me.

"They belong to one Mr. Gallacher, of some place beyond Dandenong, and whom I expect to see every moment. He has ridden on to hurry his shepherd's steps to take this lot off my hands. You must have met him; he is a tall, ugly-looking fellow, with fiery red whiskers, and his nag is a ragged-hipped, bony, chestnut brute, and only fit to carry such a specimen of mortality as Mr. Gallacher."

"What! Gallacher?" exclaimed my brother shepherd; "why, man, he is in Dandenong by this time; he passed us hours ago. You be indeed a pretty flat to listen to that 'ere chap. He is the biggest scoundrel that ever broke bread in the colonies. He has done you, mate; you will

have to drive them sheep all the way to his place, and the d—l a shilling will the fellow give you!"

"I thought so, shepherd," said I; "I have indeed been a fool; and were it not that I respect Mr. Hinton, of Sweetvale, on the Running River, and that I am expected to bring back a receipt for these sheep, I would have turned back and gone with you towards Melbourne. How far is it to Dandenong?"

"Six as good honest miles as shepherd ever trod; and Gallacher's place is nigh three miles beyond that," answered my friend.

"I thank you for what you have told me, mate," said I, offering my hand as I spoke. "Forewarned is forearmed; and by the powers! I will be a match for Mr. Gallacher."

We then parted; and when all sight of dust from the large flock had vanished, I once more proceeded on towards Dandenong.

The information which I had gleaned as to Mr. Gallacher rendered me almost furious. Desert Hinton's sheep I never for a moment thought of; but the idea of my being trapped into a journey on foot of nearly fifty miles

for the benefit of a man I despised, made me outrageously angry; I was indeed, as the Yankees say, "ryled."

At the entrance into the township of Dandenong, and about the hour of sundown, I was met by Mr. Gallacher, who, unaccompanied by any shepherd, held out a bottle of brandy, at the same time telling me that I had but one mile more to go.

"Put up your brandy, Gallacher," said I; "I will take nothing at your hands but that which I am entitled to,—and that I will have. You have drawn me nearly five-and-twenty miles from where my sheep were camped, and that under the pretence of your having no sheep-dog, and telling me that three miles would be the distance that my services would be required; and where have you brought me to? I now tell you, Gallacher, I will go no further than that bridge which I see before me, unless you give me a receipt for these sheep; and I am very desirous of knowing the amount of money you intend to hand over for my services. Your Irish bluster will not do with me,—I am no lag; and, in fact, I will tell you a secret. Now look here, Mr.

Gallacher; although I may to all appearance be a shepherd, it happens that I am a gentleman by birth, and have an arm as strong as yours; and were it not for my great friendship for Mr. Hinton I would not have gone a mile with you. Now, Mr. Gallacher, you know the terms that we are upon; and before I conclude (or, as you would say, 'shut up'), allow me to inform you that one of the shepherds that you met this day gave me your history. Lead on; and lend me a hand to drive your wethers across this bridge."

Having driven my little flock a distance of twenty-four miles within twelve hours, they were tolerably passive, and we had but little labour in effecting a crossing. Another two miles had I to drive my sheep before I was told that they had arrived at their destination; and where I evidently saw fresh troubles awaited me.

"Here you are, Henry Morton, at your journey's end," said Gallacher.

"And where, pray," I answered, "am I to camp these sheep?—sheep which are perfectly new to this run, at this hour of night."

"There is a sheep pen before your eyes,

drive them into that," replied the low-bred ruffian; "and if you want more hurdles you will find plenty about the premises; don't talk to me, but do your duty."

"Gallacher, you Irish blackguard!" I replied; "there will be a row between you and me to-night."

As I gave utterance to my short but emphatic reply, Gallacher, the owner of seven thousand sheep and a bullock run, entered the house. I drove my sheep into the pen, such as it was; collected a few hurdles to make all secure, as I thought, and entered, unasked, the domicile of Mr. Gallacher.

"I want my supper," said I. (I had found my way into the room, where I could see that he was sitting.) "I have been fourteen hours without anything to eat."

"Go then into the hut and find your supper," was the reply of the man for whom I had worked so hard. "They will give you something, I dare say."

"No, I will not, Gallacher. I will sup with you," I replied, seating myself quietly down at the table, and opposite to him.

"You will, will you?" said he. "I advise you to quit this room, or I'll ——"

"Do what?" I replied, and at the same time I rushed at him as he sat upon his chair, which I upset, and we both rolled on the ground together. "What will you do?" I screamed out, as I kept my position above him, and banged his head upon the floor.

A fearful encounter took place. Gallacher was more powerful than I was; but maddened to a state of desperation I cared not what I did.

"Will you give me a receipt for the sheep?" I screamed out, as I still held him down. "Give me that, and I will quit your premises, you disgrace to the name of Irishman!"

"Let go my throat, you ruffian!" he gasped forth; "let go my throat, and I will give you the receipt."

Believing him, I rose from my knees, and took up a good position behind the table.

"Well," said I, as he also once again stood upon his legs, "are you going to give me the receipt for the sheep, or are you not?"

Gallacher stared at me, whilst I looked him full in the face, at the same time gently handling

the identical carving-knife with which he had cut off sundry morsels never meant for my supper. Pen, ink, and paper were soon found and a receipt drawn out for the sheep, which I narrowly scanned (carving knife in hand) before I quitted the premises of Mr. Gallacher, who I pronounce to have been the greatest disgrace to Ireland that I have ever been thrown in contact with.

"There's your receipt," said he, looking daggers at me as he spoke, "and the sooner you are off my premises the better. Put down that knife; you are not going to walk off with any of my property."

"Will I give up this knife, Mr. Gallacher?" I replied; "no; I keep this towards payment of my trip from Richmond to Dandenong; and mark my words, Gallacher: the man who attempts to interrupt me in any way will receive this (holding the carving-knife up) in his chest."

With that I called my dog Lucky, and, dark as it was, retraced my steps to Dandenong, where I passed the night.

The following morning I rose early, and by four o'clock in the afternoon I was at the resi-

dence of Mr. Sutherland, to whom I handed the receipt for the sheep. He laughed heartily at my description of the fracas, and agreed with me as to Mr. Gallacher being a very bad specimen of a native of the Emerald Isle. I could see by the manner of Mr. Sutherland and his wife that Hinton had hinted, if not told them, that I was a gentleman. Mrs. Sutherland's behaviour was most courteous, and she even condescended to ask me to dine with them, but which act of kindness I refused, saying that I was anxious to get into Melbourne.

The sheep-broker informed me that Mr. Hinton had authorized him to offer me money on account of my wages, but which I declined, stating that I did not intend to return to Sweetvale. I told him how great was my respect for my late master, and that as I chose to leave his employment in so summary a manner, I did not think that I was entitled to any remuneration for my services. Mr. Sutherland did not appear much astonished at what I said, but shook me by the hand and wished me well, and at the same time told me that he should write to Mr. Hinton and acquaint

him with the ill-treatment I had received at Mr. Gallacher's hands.

That night I slept at Collingwood, but before I retired to rest I wrote a long letter to my friend Hinton, in which I apologized for leaving him so cavalierly. I told him that in doing so I had presumed upon the friendship which existed between us. I said that I looked for no remuneration at his hands for four months' shepherding, and trusted that the one who succeeded me might prove a better servant, but at the same time expressed my doubts as to his finding a more honest or more lucky dependent.

My time passed wearily enough in Collingwood; all my friends were away; my nephew and Sotheran had not returned; nothing was known of the two Carrolls. In fact, there was not a man that I could call a friend, with the exception of Prosser, to be found.

Month after month passed, and no good thing for myself had I succeded in doing, when a thought struck me that I would change the *venue* and try Geelong. To that pretty town I went, and at Mack's hotel I by chance met Mr. Coppin, the manager of the Theatre Royal

at Melbourne. In the course of conversation I told him that I had frequently been before the public, but only as an amateur. Coppin was a good, jolly sort of fellow, and an excellent actor, and that night I had an opportunity of witnessing his powers, for the theatre at Geelong was open, and he was the lessee.

The following day I again saw Mr. Coppin, when he offered me an engagement, telling me that I might have the house for two nights, which meant that I might name any pieces I thought fit for performance; and that after my histrionic efforts had been tested, he would be enabled to state what might be the salary he could afford to give me. Of course I selected pieces well known to me, and chose characters in which I had before acted. All was arranged, and with my books I returned to Melbourne, promising to be back in Geelong in three days' time, when the first rehearsal of "London Assurance" was to take place. But it was destined that I should not appear on the boards of the Geelong Theatre, although flourishing accounts were circulated of the new star who had arrived in the colony, and which were printed upon bills

at least six feet in length. The fact was, I called at Messrs. Westby's, and there found letters from home, which at once put a stop to my making a public display of myself.

The month of July had commenced, and I was an inmate of Mr. Prosser's house at Collingwood, and wear and tear of body and mind was beginning to tell severely upon my health. At times I thought again of entering the service of Hinton, but that idea was soon dispelled when I remembered that he could no longer look on me as any ordinary shepherd.

Nothing could exceed the kindness I received at the hands of Mr. Prosser and all the family, and no words can express what I felt as I each day sat down at his table to eat the bread of idleness.

One day, to my great delight and equal astonishment, I received a letter with the Sydney postmark upon it. It was from a very old friend of my brother's, and indeed from one who eventually displayed his kindness in the most marked manner towards myself. The writer of the letter was a man of good family, and heir to a baronetcy in the south of England, and of

whom I have spoken as being a hard rider to hounds, and whom David Hughes, the old whipper-in, designated as the "Butcher." He told me that it was his intention to come shortly to Melbourne to visit his brother, who held a high appointment under Government, being the Inspector-General of the Penal Department. His letter, which was very long, was indeed read by me with unutterable pleasure. From him I heard all the tittle-tattle of my own family, and indeed of all South Wales.

One evening whilst sitting alone with Prosser —it might have been a fortnight after the receipt of the letter—the subject of conversation turned upon the difficulty of getting employment under Government, unless one went upon the roads.

"With that letter in your pocket, Stretton," said old Prosser, "you are safe for employment. Take my advice; go to-morrow to Pentridge, and see the Inspector-General; if he is a gentleman he will not see you in want."

"But look at my clothes," I replied; "I have nothing but these rags in which to dress myself; and a pretty object I shall appear before

Big John, as the inspector is styled by all the old hands."

"Never mind your dress, Stretton. The inspector is a gentleman by birth, and not one of your mushroom aristocrats, with which this colony abounds; go at once, and depend upon it you will succeed."

"I will do so," said I, "and I will start for Pentridge, without further delay."

I left Prosser's house with the good wishes of all the inmates, and in two hours' time I found myself once again close to the spot where I had camped with the two Carrolls, when on my way up to Major Blois's residence to undertake the duty of tending sheep.

The stockade, where the convicts were confined, lay about half a mile from the road, and I had some little difficulty in making my way past the numerous sentries. At last I was stopped by a sergeant, who demanded my business; on which I told him that I had a letter which I was desirous of putting into the inspector's hands.

"There he is," said he, (pointing to a tall fine-looking man who was sitting on a gate,

talking to two boys, evidently his children), "and I will take you to him."

The Inspector-General was exceedingly short-sighted, and seldom did I see him without a glass fixed to his eye; but with that glass Mr. P—t could see at a marvellous distance, as was well known to all the convicted felons of Van Diemen's Land and Victoria. He was a man of most undaunted courage, and had been the dread for years of all evil-doers in Tasmania, where he had held the post of chief magistrate prior to his coming to "Australia Felix."

"This man," said the sergeant, addressing the Inspector-General, who still kept his seat on the gate, "wishes to speak to you, sir."

"Well, my man; and pray what may you want with me?" answered the great man, fixing his eyes upon me as if he would read my inmost thoughts.

"I wish you, sir, to read this letter," said I, handing him the epistle that I had received from his brother. With a haughty air he took the letter, but no sooner had his eye seen the superscription than he jumped from the gate, saying—

"Why! this letter is from my brother, Frank!

You do not mean to say that you are a brother of Stretton, of D—— Park?"

"I am, sir," I replied, "and your brother Francis is his most intimate friend."

"Pardon me for a minute, whilst I read a portion of this long letter," said he; which he commenced doing with apparently very great interest.

For two or three minutes I stood silently regarding the man who was the terror of all villains; when, dropping the glass from his eye, he said—

"Mr. Stretton, I am glad to see you; come with me into the house and have some luncheon."

"No, sir," I replied; "I feel grateful for your kindness, but I will not enter your doors the figure that I am, and more especially where there is a lady."

"Nonsense, man!" he went on; "dress is nothing out here;—come along!" catching hold, as he spoke, of the collar of my blue shirt; and which I was fearful would have been left in his hand, so rotten was it. Finding all resistance useless, I accompanied the Inspector-General and his children to the house. Ushering me into

a handsomely furnished apartment he rang the bell; and upon the entrance of a servant he ordered luncheon, and also desired him to tell his mistress that he wished to speak to her.

The servant retired, and in a few minutes Mrs. P—t entered the room, who at once won my heart from the kindness of her manner in greeting a stranger so ill clad as myself.

In ten minutes I was perfectly at ease, and sitting down to a most excellent luncheon; and the first meal that I had been present at, which at all reminded me of days gone by.

"Well, Mr. Stretton," said Mr. P—t, and as he spoke he pushed the decanter towards me, "I think I know what it is has brought you here to-day. You want employment? and it so happens that you have come at a most fortunate moment; for one day later the appointment would have been bestowed upon another. In three days' time you will see yourself gazetted as chief warder of the "Sacramento." To-morrow I shall see the governor, who I have no doubt will confirm the appointment, so you may at once procure your uniforms, and join the hulks now lying at Geelong. The appointment that you are

about to hold is one of great responsibility; the emoluments are good, and your duties by no means arduous. And I assure you it is very gratifying to my feelings to be enabled to render any assistance, however slight, to the brother of my brother's friend."

Great indeed was my astonishment at finding myself the holder of a Government appointment, and that conferred on me, I might almost say, unasked. I need not say that the thanks which I returned the Inspector-General for his kindness were heartfelt; in point of fact so taken was I by surprise, that I hardly knew what I said. The entire afternoon was passed by me at the stockade, and over that extensive establishment I was conducted; and it was not until long after dark that I again reached Prosser's house at Collingwood.

The old gentleman, and, indeed, all the family, expressed their great delight at hearing of my success; and, after having thanked them for their congratulations, I calmly sat down to talk over with my old friend that most disagreeable subject, "ways and means."

My finances were very low at that time, and

clothes, more especially uniforms, were at a fabulous price; added to which it was requisite that I should have the entire outfit of a gentleman before I could enter upon my new duties.

"You shall not lose your appointment for want of clothes," said Prosser; "I will go with you to-morrow to the best tailor in Melbourne, and everything that is necessary you shall have. I don't forget your brother's kindness to me in the hour of need. No, Mr. Stretton, you shall join as a gentleman; and glad we all shall be to see you once again dressed as befits your station in life."

With tears in my eyes, I sprung from my seat to thank Prosser for his kindness, telling him that my debt would soon be repaid, as my salary was very liberal.

That night we had a regular jollification, and had I but known where Edward Carroll and his brother were I should have felt very happy. The following day Prosser accompanied me to Melbourne, and the necessary orders were given for all that was essential to the outward appearance of a gentleman.

On the third day after my visit to Pentridge,

I called at the office of the Penal Department, where I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. P—t, who told me that the governor had signed the requisite papers, and that I must join immediately. After a little talk, however, I succeeded in getting seven days' leave, which enabled me to make myself tolerably comfortable, before entering upon the duties of head jailer.

It was a fine morning, towards the latter end of August, that I put myself on board the "Melbourne," bound for Geelong. We had a beautiful passage; and in a very few minutes after landing I was in a gig, making my way to a pretty little bay situated three miles from the town where lay the "Sacramento." Hailing the hulk, which was moored about three hundred yards from land, I was answered by the question, "Who are you?"

I replied by calling out, "Chief warder; and want to come on board."

In less than ten minutes, a boat, manned by four men and a sergeant, touched the shore, into which I jumped, and soon afterwards I had taken possession of my new quarters on board Her Majesty's hulk "Sacramento."

I found the superintendent of our establishment to be a very gentlemanly and an exceedingly well-looking man; and in five minutes we became great friends. The only other officers were a Mr. Mansell and a Mr. Wagstaff, who were also gentlemen—the former a lieutenant in the navy, the latter had held a commission in the 95th regiment. Mr. Wells, who was the superintendent, took the first rank; I, as chief warder, claimed second; Mr. Mansell, as second officer, took the third; and Mr. Wagstaff, as storekeeper, fourth. The rest of the employés which constituted the establishment, were two sergeants, two corporals, and thirty-eight warders,—all of whom were armed to the teeth.

I was very much pleased, in turning into my crib at night (or rather morning, for my brother officers had made a sort of night of it), to find that I had met with such gentlemanly men, and to see such excellent accommodations as I was entitled to.

Some few months before I joined the "Sacramento" the railway from Geelong to Melbourne had been commenced, which line came within

a few hundred yards of where we were lying. Free labour at that time being ten shillings a day, the Government naturally thought that something might be done by forced work, and thus a contract was entered into, and we furnished a very strong party at the rate of five shillings per man *per diem*, and which gang it was my duty, and that of my subordinates, to guard.

I found my duties by no means arduous; and I succeeded by gentle means in gaining the goodwill of nearly all the prisoners under my charge.

At six o'clock in the morning I would see as many as were able to work into the life-boats, when Mr. Mansell would have the charge until they were landed, and there they would be received by the guard, who at six o'clock in the evening saw them safely into the boats, and again under Mansell's care, until they came on board, where I was ready to receive them.

CHAPTER X.

Conspiracy of Convicts Detected.—A Loving Epistle.—Informer Pardoned.—New Convicts.—A Handsome Convict.—Examination of the Convict.—A Fraudulent Clerk.

FOR some weeks nothing occurred in any way to break the monotony of our prison discipline; when, one day, a sergeant informed me that a prisoner of the name of Baldwin wished to speak to me, and alone. Baldwin was a man whose term of punishment was for six years, four of which he had undergone. He had been a man well to do, and was from Sydney side, where his wife and family were still residing.

Upon my going into his cell (he was the only occupant) he put his finger to his lips, as if to impose silence, and handed me his slate. I had succeeded in getting from the Government a supply of those articles, thinking that perhaps the convicts would try to improve themselves in writing, but which they did not; and shortly

afterwards we were compelled to take them away altogether, to such bad uses did the prisoners turn them. Taking the slate from his hands, I read the following:—

"HONOURED SIR,

"Williamson, who gets his freedom to-morrow, is to plant, on Thursday night, arms and tobacco about the earthworks along the line where the gang are working, and on Friday the prisoners will rush on the guard when knocking off for dinner.

"They will not harm you, should you be there; but they have sworn to kill Pilkington and Corporal Brady.

"Your most obedient servant,

"WILLIAM BALDWIN."

Without speaking, I motioned him to rub off the writing; called Sergeant Carson, who was waiting for me, to lock Baldwin's cell door, and went to my own cabin. For some time I sat considering what I should do. I could not bring myself to believe that the prisoners would dare attempt to rush on the guard, who were all armed

with double-barrelled guns charged with slugs, and all of whom had cutlasses. I had, it is true, many men on board the "Sacramento" who were capable of committing any crime, to whom one more murder would be as nothing, provided their lives did not pay the penalty. I had as prisoners men from every part of the habitable globe, and whose terms of punishment ranged from two years up to life-long servitude.

Sergeant Carson, to whom I have alluded, was a most excellent officer, and had seen much prison management in Van Diemen's Land; and to him I determined to confide what Baldwin had written: and I sent for him into my own cabin. Upon my telling him what Baldwin had written on the slate, he smiled and said—

"Williamson, sir, may perhaps deposit some tobacco along the line, but I do not think that he would go to the expense of purchasing arms; and as for the gang rushing on the guard,—they dare not do it, sir."

"Well, Carson," I replied, "we must be prepared for everything. On Thursday night, late, you and I will take our dark lanterns and search that part of the line where they are now

at work, and on Friday I will double the guard. But say not a word to any one; only remember that neither Corporal Brady nor Pilkington are for duty on that day. Do you think Williamson is the sort of fellow to do this piece of business, Carson? I have always thought him to be so quiet and well-behaved."

"I agree with you, sir," said Carson, in reply; "Williamson has always behaved well since he has been with us; and I was this very morning thinking of asking you to speak to the other officers, so that he might leave the hulk in other clothes than those he has now on. 'Penal department 118,' stamped upon his back, would not look very well. Perhaps you and the other gentlemen will do something for him?"

Assuring him that I would give some article of dress myself, and would intercede with my friends on Williamson's behalf, I told him that he might go; but I again warned him to say nothing of what we had been informed.

There was (and I presume is so at the present time) a curious regulation as to the private clothes of convicts. Whether good or bad we burned them; and I have thus seen some articles

which would not have disgraced a gentleman's wardrobe, committed to the flames.

On the following day Williamson (no longer a convict) appeared on the main deck of the "Sacramento," dressed in the clothes which we had raked together, and in which he looked remarkably well; for his hair having been suffered to grow for three months, the man appeared to be a very decent mechanic.

It was our practice when a prisoner was discharged, to send him to the detective office, where he was again stripped and his marks once more taken, in order that he might be well known. I could not help regarding him with a steadfast look as he thanked me for my kindness towards him, and said to myself, "Can this man intend again this very night to commit crime?"

"Williamson," said I, offering him my hand, "you have ample money to start yourself well in life; go to the Ballaarat diggings,—they are but thirty miles from Geelong,—and let us some day hear of your well doing."

"God bless you, sir! God bless all the officers! I shall never forget the kindness I have received," he said, shaking my hand, and speak-

ing in a voice tremulous from emotion; for indeed tears ran down the cheeks of the snivelling and double-faced villain!

Desirous that Carson might see the last of Williamson, I ordered him to accompany the released man to the detective office, and to watch him narrowly whilst at Geelong; and I enforced upon him the necessity of being back in time to accompany me in my search among the earthworks.

Carson, who returned before dark, told me that he believed that there was not the slightest cause for apprehending a break-out among the convicts. He said that he felt certain that Williamson had already started for Ballaarat; and then asked me if I intended searching the works? I told him that was my intention, and ordered him to be ready at eleven o'clock; and if questioned by the boatmen to say that we were going to visit the warders who were hutted on shore.

The night was fine when Carson and I jumped into the boat, which soon bore us to the shore of the little land-locked bay in which we were moored. Telling the boatman to return to

the hulk, and to keep a look-out, for that when a light was shown where we then stood they would have to come off for us again, Carson and I made our way to that portion of the line where the men were accustomed to work.

Every likely spot was minutely searched by us; not a stump hardly escaped our notice; when Carson picked up a twig partially stripped of its bark, which was stuck in a mound of new-raised soil.

"We are not far off something, I think, sir," said the sergeant, "we must hunt over every inch of ground; those d—ls of ours are as 'cute as the arch fiend himself. I have seen most of their dodges, and am pretty well up to all their manœuvres, clever as they think themselves."

We had been about an hour and a half at our work, and I was beginning to think that we should find nothing, and that the information given by Baldwin was all false, when suddenly Carson called out—

"Here it is, sir!"

I was about a dozen yards from him at the time, when hastening up to him, I saw him draw forth a large packet neatly stitched up in sail-

cloth, which, on opening, we found to contain some ten or eleven pounds of Barrett's twist tobacco,—the nicest preparation, to my mind, that is manufactured in America. The discovery of the tobacco put us quite on the *qui vive*, and for two hours more we searched the works, but, to our annoyance, we found no arms.

It was getting on for three o'clock on the eventful Friday morning, when the signal which had been agreed upon was by me displayed from the shore, and shortly afterwards I could hear the dipping of the oars as the boatmen gently pulled towards us.

On reaching the "Sacramento," I repeated to Carson my orders relative to the doubling of the guard, and to the striking off the list of men for duty the names of Brady and Pilkington; I then laid myself down on the sofa to await the hour of unlocking. My habit was always to visit the convicts when at their work, at twelve o'clock in the day, the time that they rested for dinner; but that morning I determined to accompany them, and remain with them the entire twelve hours. I ought to have mentioned it before, but we had two overseers of the works,

who had the entire management of the labour department as regarded the prisoners; they again looked to a Mr. Grant, the contractor, for their instructions.

Six o'clock struck, and the men one by one took their seats in the life-boats; and I could see, as they looked at one another, that they thought something was amiss. They did not appear to understand why the guard was doubled; neither could they make out what reasons I had for accompanying them, a thing which they had not seen done before. The gang were safely landed, and the usual guards received them; the men quietly picked up their tools, which were deposited by the warders' hut, or barracks, and marched to their work, without the slightest indication of any insubordination existing among them. Of course, I had warned Messieurs White and Moran, the two overseers, of the contemplated rush, but at which they appeared to laugh; and, indeed, I began to think that the prisoner Baldwin had either attempted to humbug me, or that he had been made a fool of; and yet, I thought there must be some truth in it, for the tobacco was found.

For some time I watched the men as they pretended to settle to their work. That they were hunting for something was evident; and I could see that they were restless and out of temper, and I guessed it to be the *barked twig* that they so anxiously sought, but which at that moment was in my cabin. At last they settled down to work, and apparently with a good will; so telling Carson that I should return before the dinners were brought, I strolled to the farm-residence of a Mr. Gawne, a native of the Isle of Man, where I have passed many, many hours. Mr. Gawne had a nice place, and nicer daughter; and it was through his land we were cutting at that time.

After whiling away two hours with the Manx family, I rose to rejoin my "pets," as the convicts were facetiously called. Mr. Moran advanced to meet me, and upon my inquiring how the men were working, he said, "Never better." He told me that he had no fears of any rush; and he thought that it was useless my remaining any longer, as all betokened the most submissive behaviour on the part of the convicts.

At last I could see the dinners coming; and

the moment was drawing nigh when the prisoners were to make good their attempt upon the guard. I kept continually watching the countenances of those men who were known as being the most determined; but nothing could I see to excite the slightest suspicion, and I felt assured that the day would pass off peaceably.

"Knock off for dinner," cried Mr. Moran, who was standing by my side upon a mound of earth.

The words were hardly out of the overseer's mouth when a loud voice called out: "Their irons are broken!—look out!"

To order the guard to close in was the work of a moment; and the villains stood appalled as I told my men to shoot down the first man that moved. Baldwin, for it was he who had cried out, had thrown himself under the protection of one of the warders; and luckily for him he had done so, for he assuredly would have been murdered; and my first act was to send him, under the guard of a warder, to the hulk.

The gang which we that day had out were equally divided, as to those who were in irons and those who were not. No sooner did I see

Baldwin safe off,—in whose ears must have disagreeably sounded the threatened vengeance that awaited him if again in their power,—than I ordered the men who wore chains to be separated from the others, in order that I might find out all those who had broken their irons. Making them all sit down in a half circle, accompanied by Carson and a corporal, who were both armed, I went minutely over each man's chains; when I found that seven only had succeeded in doing that which gave them seven years' additional servitude.

It may appear to the reader strange, that they should have been enabled to break those leg-irons; but let it be remembered that they had heavy sledge-hammers in their hands, and that, by placing the basil (as it is called) or ring which goes round the ankle against a rock or large stone, one tap from that heavy instrument was sufficient.

The seven men were, as I expected to find, some of the worst of my prisoners. I ordered them to be immediately handcuffed to one another, and then sent them also to the hulk, under a strong escort. Having despatched the

ringleaders, I quietly told them to go to their dinners.

Whilst watching the gang as they ate their mid-day meal (and which meal was indeed far too good for them), I could see many scowling faces; but nothing overt was done to enable me to make any more examples that day.

Before their dinner was eaten, Mr. Moran and Mr. White both expressed a wish to march the whole gang back to the hulk, fearing lest they might make another attempt, and we might lose some of our prisoners. To this project I gave my decided veto; and told them that they should do their work as usual, for that if the convicts got into their heads the idea that they had frightened us, there was no knowing what might be the consequences. I then warned the prisoners that the first man that attempted to escape would be shot down. For the remainder of the day the men worked steadily, and by half-past six o'clock all were safe again on board.

That night a statement of what had taken place went up to the Inspector-General; and in a few days orders were sent down for Baldwin's

immediate removal to Pentridge, where I very shortly afterwards obtained his discharg The penal department held out as a rewar to convicts a remission of a certain portion tion their sentence, provided they gave any informa tion calculated to save life.

Now, it was, indeed, providential in Baldwin case; for the day before he left us to go to Pen ridge stockade, a letter came from his wif which document it was my duty to peruse; an after satisfying myself with the contents, an erasing any portion which might render hir more unhappy than his position entailed upo him, to hand it to a serjeant to read to him. have before stated that Mrs. Baldwin was we to do, and living at Paramatta, some five hun dred and fifty miles from Melbourne.

I will here give a verbatim copy of th loving epistle of a devoted wife to a husban in trouble.

"Paramatta, Sydney,
"October 16, 1855.

"DEAR HUSBAND,

"This leaves me as it hopes to find you well. And bles't be to G—d the childre likewise. I does stunning with the dray's, plenty

to do and no mistake. I'se put new shingling on the roof of the house.

"Keep up your pluck like a brick; your time will soon be out. So no more at present from your "Loving wife,

"MARY BALDWIN."

"P.S. don't think, old bloke, that I am going to wait two more years for you. I shall be off with the first man that will take me."

"There's a beautiful production, Carson, for you to read to Baldwin," said I, as I handed him the letter; "it is from his wife. I have erased the postscript, as you will see. It strikes me that he will be with his better half now before she can put her threat into execution."

Carson merely agreed with me in trusting that Baldwin would gain his liberty; and left the cabin to read the precious document to him.

Within a fortnight after his arrival at Pentridge, a pardon was granted by the Governor; and Baldwin doubtless made the best of his way to his home at Paramatta.

I will not weary the reader with the monotony of prison life; much of course that was

heartrending, and much that was highly rid culous, fell under my notice.

About a month after Baldwin's departure was lying on the poop of the "Sacramento," ov the entire of which was an awning to protect and us from the heat of the sun, when Wagsta the storekeeper, drew my attention to the gliste ing of bayonets in the distance; which warn me that a batch of prisoners were comin Ordering the life-boat to go on shore to be rea to receive the new comers, I waited on the po the arrival of a very motley group. As t Sheriff came on deck he handed me a l of twenty-six convicts. Attached to Numb Thirteen were these few ominous words: " South American, and desperate character; c do nothing with him: beware of him." I the steps they came, all handcuffed togeth and, with the exception of one, I never saw su a villainous looking lot. That one was a spl did looking young fellow, and most exquisit dressed; he occupied the centre of the line they stood on the main deck to have their nan called over.

I do not think I ever saw a handsomer you

man. His hair, which he wore long, hung in black curls down his neck; his eyes, which were very dark, and which had a very sweet expression, were surmounted by a pair of beautifully marked eyebrows; his figure was rather slight, and he was of the middle height. The dress which he had on at the time was admirably made; and the convict had displayed a vast deal of taste in the whole of his attire.

In a moment I saw that he was of a different class to that which we were accustomed to receive, and I desired Carson to take him into a cell by himself, when his turn came to be stripped and to change his clothes for the Government livery.

I happened to be walking on the lower deck about half an hour after I had signed a receipt to the Sheriff for the bodies of the twenty-six new comers, when I passed the cell where Serjeant Carson, assisted by a warder, was stripping Francis, for that was the name of the dandy prisoner.

"Will you have the kindness to come here, sir?" said Carson. "Is it not a sin to destroy such clothes as these? (holding out some pink

silk elastic under clothing), but we must do it."

"It is so, Carson," I replied; "but we have no alternative. Everything good or bad must be destroyed; there is one article, however, I will take upon myself to save from destruction, and that is these braces (at the same time taking up a very handsomely worked pair, with the name of Jemima embroidered thereon), for I fancy they are worked by the wife of the prisoner."

"God Almighty bless you, sir!" exclaimed the prisoner, dropping his hands from the erect position in which they were placed above his head, and making an attempt to move forward naked as he was. "Yes, sir, they were indeed worked by my poor wife. Oh! may I keep them, sir? say that I may, and I will bless your name for ever."

"As to your having them in your own keeping is out of the question, Francis," I replied; "they are far too smart for working in; but I will keep them, and they shall be ticketed; and at the expiration of your time they will be handed to you. What is that, Carson, that he has between the fingers of his left hand (observ-

ing something dark, as he again raised up his hands in the position from which he had dropped them.

"Oh, it's only a lock of hair," answered Carson, taking it from him and about to throw it out of the port-hole; which act seemed to distress the poor fellow much.

"No, no, Carson," said I; "let him have it; a lock of his wife's hair can do no harm; and that is an article that is not mentioned in the list of things to be destroyed."

The poor fellow fairly broke down on retaking from the hands of the serjeant the cherished curl, and wept. Being by no means hardhearted myself I left the cell; but not before I had asked him if he wrote a good hand, which he assured me he did, and had promised to see him on the morrow. My heart was touched by his sorrows; but that man, a gentleman by birth and education, had yielded to temptation; he had committed forgery. The truth is, the young man, who had but a few months previous to his coming to us held a responsible situation in a merchant's office, had forged his employer's name for the express purpose of being enabled to marry the prettiest

girl in Geelong, to whom he was much attached; they had been for some time engaged, and the attachment was mutual. Being much esteemed by his employer, he had little trouble in getting three weeks' leave of absence. But the deed had been done, and successfully, a week before he asked permission to absent himself.

They were married; and after visiting Melbourne they sailed for Hobart Town, in Van Diemen's Land, where he was taken. He was brought back, (his wife accompanying him,) tried, convicted, and sentenced to four years' penal servitude;—a sad termination to their honeymoon.

I was much struck the following day, on Carson's bringing Francis to my room, by seeing the extraordinary alteration in the outward appearance of my good-looking convict. The loss of his beautiful hair and moustache, and the change to the costume of the penal department, had obliterated all traces of the gentleman, with the exception of his teeth and hands. As he stood before me whilst taking down his crime, his sentence, his place of birth, &c., I thought

what his wife would feel could she but see him now; little expecting that I should have to undergo the scene of their meeting before many days were over.

Finding that Francis wrote an excellent hand I had him in my quarters every day for an hour; during which time he wrote out reports, the copies of which I gave him. There was no breach of duty in my having the prisoner in my room; but I decidedly did not act up to my instructions when I daily left a pipe, a little tobacco, and some weak whiskey and water on the table as I left the room, with the order to have that written out in an hour's time, which he could easily have done in fifteen minutes; thereby allowing him three-quarters of an hour (as he called it) of perfect bliss.

Every day at eleven o'clock Francis made his appearance in my room; he sat himself down at the table, the books and writing materials before him, as easily as if he was at his accustomed desk; but I could see a slight change come over his countenance when he found that his much-coveted stimulants had not already been arranged for him. Of course

all this was done under the rose; and he was too wise to make a confidant of any one.

In about a month's time after the arrival of Francis, his poor wife made a fruitless attempt to see him. She came to the water's edge accompanied by two other females. The weather had been very wet and unsettled. I have seldom had my feelings more tried than I had that day as she knelt on the muddy ground with her arms clasped round my legs and entreated to be allowed to see her husband. It was indeed hard work to stand against that woman's tears; but I did so, and told her, that by going to Melbourne and seeing the Inspector-General of the penal department, she would be allowed to see her husband for an hour, upon some given day. I also told her that her husband was very well in health; warned her that she would see a great change in his appearance; and lastly, promised to do all that was in my power to ameliorate his sufferings, as far as duty would permit.

CHAPTER XI.

The Fraudulent Clerk and his Wife.—The Last Embrace.—The Convict Antonio Pombes.—His Sullenness, and Attack on me.—The Riots at Ballaarat.—Convicts Towed up to Port Phillip.—Convicts Attacked with Cholera.—My Remedy for Cholera.—Extensive Tooth-Drawing.—Turpentine for Cholera.—A Monomaniac.—A Desperate Convict.—Recognized by the Prisoner.—Cries of Distress.—Barbarity of the Police.

In a very few days Mrs. Francis again made her appearance at the same spot where I had met her, and finding that she had an authority to come on board, she was admitted.

In all the hulks and stockades there was a room set apart for visitors; but invariably there was some one placed to watch them; so careful were we to guard against treachery.

In this instance, having faith in Francis, I ordered the wife to be conducted to my sitting-room, saying that I myself would take the place of the watcher. I had previously placed upon the table a pint of sherry, a *little* brandy, and some tobacco—the wine to keep up the spirits

of the lady, the other named articles to render the husband less downcast.

With a faltering step Mrs. Francis was ushered into my cabin. I begged her to be calm, and told her that I myself would fetch her husband; but that she must not expect to see him the same man as when she had last parted from him.

Leaving her the picture of misery as she appeared, I went with Carson to the cell where Francis was confined. There were two other inmates of that cell, and not wishing they should overhear anything I might have to communicate, I told the serjeant merely to say that I wished to speak to him.

On his coming up to me and taking off his hat, I told him quietly that his wife had come to see him; and that I would allow him two hours of her society instead of one, provided that she acted up to the rules of the prison.

Poor Francis was all of a tremble at finding that his wife was actually in the same vessel with himself; but he soon rallied, and he promised me to conduct himself in such a way (by not receiving anything at her hands) that my faith in him might not be shaken.

I shall long remember the meeting of the young couple. I think I still hear the screams she gave utterance to as I said, "Mrs. Francis, here is your husband."

With what a look of sadness did she fix her large and soft eyes upon the still handsome face of that man to whom she had but a few weeks before given her hand at the altar! The change in his appearance seemed to wound her deeply.

"Francis," said I, "strictly speaking, I ought not to quit this room; but I do not wish to hear any private conversation, and therefore I shall leave this door open, and remain in the adjoining cabin. Mrs. Francis, you can give your husband nothing that will do him any service, or which will be unknown to me. Now, I leave you."

For two hours the husband and the wife enjoyed each other's society. They chatted away apparently after a time with great composure, if not with cheerfulness; and I have no doubt that both thought the two hours that I had granted them, very short.

Calling out Carson's name, that worthy man entered the room, when I desired him to conduct

Mrs. Francis to the boat. We then together entered the next room. On my acquainting them that the time for their separation had arrived, both appeared dreadfully distressed. Not wishing to disturb their last moments together by our presence, I again left them, taking Carson with me; but still keeping an eye on them.

Long indeed was the last embrace. Mrs. Francis hung round his neck as if determined that no mortal hand should separate them. At last imprinting one long kiss upon his lips she turned, and seeing me about to enter the room, she said, "I am now ready to go, sir."

Without taking my eyes from off the countenance of Francis, I desired Carson to conduct the wife to the boat, and no sooner were their backs turned than I said, "Francis, bail up, and open your mouth."

He did so, and in it I found five sovereigns; that last, long lingering kiss was indeed meant for something.

"It is no use, Francis," said I, as he handed me the gold, "attempting to deceive us. I was well aware that your wife gave you something

as she took leave of you. What good could this do you? It will be put aside and ticketed, and handed to you, together with your braces, when your time is expired."

"Pray, sir, do not report this," replied Francis, "I am aware that my wife (here he burst into tears) has broken the rules; but she did it from affection to her husband."

I at once told him that I would think no more of it; but hinted to him that the act of his wife giving him the money was quite sufficient to have her denied another interview. Carson having returned, I sent Francis to his cell.

I will now mention some little about the South American, Antonio Pombes, who I have stated did not bear the best of characters. That man had not committed any very heinous offence until about three weeks after the visit of Mrs. Francis to the "Sacramento." It is true that his sullen manner bordered upon insolence and insubordination; but one evening, at half-past eight, on going my rounds to see that every cell was searched, and every prisoner locked up, he made an attack upon me. It was our habit to put three or one prisoner

into each cell. Now Antonio Pombes was one of those, from the violence of whose character it was deemed best to keep by himself.

On the evening in question I was going my rounds, and upon coming to the cell where Pombes was confined, he was told to come out, whilst one of the men who accompanied me searched his small room. His cell-door happened to be directly opposite the ship's hold, but on the lower deck.

As the man came out I remarked that his manner was more than usually sullen; neither did he uncover his head and stand in a respectful attitude, as was his duty, but he folded his arms and leaned his back against the wall. Upon my desiring him to stand up and take his hat off, he did not move: it is true he did not understand a word of English or French, but he had been long enough with us to have learnt respect. I then walked up to him and with the back of my hand I dashed off his hat; that one act of mine was sufficient to rouse the blood of the Mexican. He sprang at me like a tiger, and had it not been for Corporal Brady, who threw himself on us as we were falling, both Pombes and myself would

have gone down the hold, where nothing could have saved us from destruction; as it was we both fell on the grating, the prisoner uppermost, who managed to get his long fingers, or rather claws, within the collar of my shirt, and was commencing to worry me, when Brady dealt him a terrific blow over the head, which left him senseless, still lying upon me. Serjeant Carson, who, hearing the disturbance, had rushed out of the cell, soon extricated me, with the assistance of Brady, from beneath the body of the South American, when he was instantly handcuffed. Water was then thrown upon his face, some stimulants were given to him, and in less than ten minutes he was safely replaced in his cell, to the wall of which he was chained for a few hours to cool his courage. No further punishment was inflicted upon him, as I did not press the charge; and in a fortnight I managed to get rid of him, when he fell under the hands of one who would give him different treatment to that which he received at my hands.

Month after month passed by and we still remained in our pretty little bay, three miles from Geelong, when an event took place only

thirty-five miles from us, which created a great sensation throughout the colony of Victoria. It was in the month of December, 1855, that the riots at Ballaarat broke out, which unfortunately arose through the over stringent measures connected with the digging licences, and which ended in the loss of many lives, both on the part of the military and the rioters. It is not for me to hint whether or no the Government were not to blame; it is certain that poor Sir Charles Hotham, the Governor, was dreadfully distressed, and did not long survive that business.

Well, the Government being fearful that some attempt might be made to liberate the prisoners on board the "Sacramento," sent orders to make preparations, as a steamer would be in readiness on a certain day to tow us up to Port Phillip, where we were to lie. How on earth the convicts heard of the disturbance at Ballaarat none of us could conjecture; but that they knew much concerning it is very certain. Their conduct became violent in the extreme; and the greatest caution had to be used to prevent a general outbreak. At last the steamer arrived

which was to tow us towards Melbourne; and whether it arose from an idea among the convicts that they would have greater facilities for escape near that city, or that they rejoiced in change of scene, I do not know; but this I do know, that with every mile we made their insolence and insubordination increased. It was midnight when we cast anchor in Hobson's Bay, and when day dawned we found ourselves lying between the guns of her Majesty's ships "Electra," and "Fantome." Still did the hardened wretches keep up an incessant uproar; and it was not until they had been told that orders had come down for all the employées attached to the establishment to quit the hulk, so that a broadside might be poured into the "Sacramento," in order to sink her with her vile freight, that they were quieted; and indeed the "Fantome" had actually her guns run out.

In two or three days all became as orderly as it had been the contrary, and instead of railroad-making my "pets" had to turn their hands to quarrying, in conjunction with the prisoners from the other hulks. Our change from Geelong was not found agreeable to any one, and to

myself it was singularly displeasing; it was not the monotony that I complained of, or indeed of the conduct of the men: I did not in the least care for the increased duties which fell upon us; and I really can hardly say what it was that troubled me. I believe now, that I was suffering from the same disease to which I have seen so many succumb—home sickness.

Again week after week passed, and with little variety, when one night, or rather morning, I was awakened by a warder who told me that one of the prisoners was taken very ill, he believed with cholera. Having the key of the medicine-chest, I thought I would make him a dose; so I mixed some rhubarb, essence of cloves, and brandy together, which I myself saw administered. The poor fellow was certainly very ill; but I am equally certain that my first attempt at doctoring was highly successful. Oh! how the fellow smacked his lips at the brandy, and especially after receiving an extra drop from the bottle wherewith to wash his mouth out. I had more blessings called down upon my head that night by that prisoner than I ever had before, or probably shall ever have again.

The following night, about the same time, I was again awoke by another warder who was on duty on the lowest deck. He informed me that the whole of his ward were complaining of frightful pains in the stomach, and wishing to know if the doctor could not be sent for. I was in a regular fix. I knew not for some time what to do, when at last a thought struck me. I remembered that, when a very little boy, there were painters in my mother's house, who had left in a cup a quantity of spirits of turpentine. Playing as I was with my brother Frederick, I expressed a desire for something to drink, when he (eighteen months my senior) gave me the contents of that cup to drink. Of course I was taken somewhat aback, and indeed, according to my honoured mother's account, very nearly being done for; but the doctors managed to save that life which, perhaps, in the opinion of some, might just as well have ended at five years as being allowed to creep on towards fifty. Jumping out of bed, I went to the medicine-chest, and handed the warder a huge bottle of spirits of turpentine, and a large medical glass. I then partially dressed myself, and sallied forth to act the good

Samaritan. One after another I drenched the rascals with about half, as I supposed, of the stinking stuff that I had in my youth imbibed, and nothing could exceed the delight with which they swallowed that night the pine-juice. Of course there was a vast amount of coughing, and one would have thought that it was hooping-cough instead of cholera that was raging in the ship. I have no doubt the prisoners had a right good laugh at my expense, and thought what a muff was Charlie, as I was by those gentlemen facetiously called.

The next day, however, our doctor came on board (he had his regular days), and it was my habit to inquire of the convicts in the morning if they wished to see him. To my astonishment many did; and all of them were anxious to have each two or three teeth drawn.

"Well, doctor," I said as he came into my quarters, "I have got a funny list for you to-day: every man named in that paper wants one or two teeth drawn. I cannot make it out; two consecutive nights I have been nearly frightened out of my wits, believing I had cholera on board. Last night I used nearly two quarts (imperial

measure) of spirits of turpentine, which, I am glad to say, seemed to ease them all; indeed, the fellows smacked their lips with a gusto that I have not seen lately."

"By Æsculapius!" screamed out the doctor, throwing himself on a sofa, his sides shaking from laughter, "this is a good joke! You have hit upon the very medicine that I should have given the rogues had they attempted to play the fool with me. Tell me, Stretton, how much did you give each man?"

"I should say," I replied, "about a good claret glass-full. It was one of your long physic affairs, with no end of marks upon it, that they drank from."

"You hit it admirably, and had you but given a little more, you might have saved our Government thousands of pounds by sending all your patients to Davie's locker."

"Well, I am glad that I failed in that, not being over-anxious to have even *justifiable* homicide upon my conscience. But tell me, doctor, what is the meaning of so many men all suddenly wishing to have their teeth drawn? For I can assure you that during the lengthened

period we lay at Geelong not one dozen tusks were extracted."

"My good fellow," answered Medico, "you have done all the mischief. You started them in the first instance by giving the brandy and cloves; now they will each lose a tooth for another glass of brandy, which the cunning knaves know they are sure to receive. You have much to learn yet with regard to the treating of convicts. They know that you are kind-hearted, and they humbug you. Now let us go to work. Order one of your fellows to bring a bottle of 'medical comfort' down to the lowest deck."

Telling one of the warders to choose a large bottle of brandy and to follow us, Doctor Williams and myself, accompanied by Carson and Brady, went below. The first patient was a most amusing fellow; he had three teeth drawn, and Doctor Williams assured me that those teeth were extracted simply from a feeling on the part of the prisoner to break the monotony of his existence. On my telling the Stoic (for most manfully did he bear the tugs which the Doctor gave his unfortunate jaw) not to suffer the blood from his mouth to fall on the deck,

which was as white as milk, he only mumbled something and looked up at Doctor Williams's face, when immediately all that was so anxiously wished for he had, which was a good sized claret glass full of brandy. Rising from the ground (for our doctor made all his patients sit when performing dental surgery) the convict made a salute, and with a countenance beaming with delight rejoined his two mates in the cell appropriated to them. It was the same thing with all the others; only one fellow cried out (and well he might do so for Doctor Williams nearly pulled his head off), and had it not been for me I verily believe that my friend would have served but a half ration of the much-coveted spirit to the unfortunate prisoner for being a cur, as he termed him.

Upon my inquiring how I was to act should another case of incipient cholera show itself, he told me to *stick* to the turpentine, and he assured me that I should not err, in fact he rather, I thought, wished me to increase the dose. Doctor Williams was then a rising man, and I have no doubt holds now a high position in Victoria, although I am glad to see that Doctor McCrae

still retains the chief rank under Governm
as a medical officer.

About six weeks after the scene I have
scribed, my servant was taken ill, a sad loss
deed to me. His conduct whilst with me h
been admirable, and by my representations his l
irons, to which he was condemned for two yea
had been struck. The young fellow had
ceived an excellent education, and was son
the manager of one of our best club-houses
London, besides which he had been valet to
Rev. M. P., a wealthy clergyman in No
Wales. To my dying day I shall believe h
innocent of the offence (horse-stealing) for wh
he was condemned to four years' servitude, two
which he was to suffer in irons. Representati
after representation was made to the Gove
ment at my request, but the only answer obtain
was that the Government could see no reas
to reverse the judgment of Justice A'Becket.

Owen was a Welshman (I had but t
of that nation, which speaks greatly for
morality of the Principality), and he labour
under a belief that I had defrauded him out o
sum exceeding forty thousand pounds. So v

lent did he become at last that I was obliged to have him heavily ironed and to send him away.

I should not have alluded to Owen's case but that he was very nearly the cause of my death. One of the warders incautiously left a tin dish in that man's cell, attached to the rim of which dish was a wire binding. (I have, I believe, before stated that we had inspection-holes, by which we could, unperceived ourselves, watch every prisoner.) Passing down the wards one day, I let down the little cover of the peep-hole of the Welshman's cell, when a sharp instrument was immediately protruded with great force, which fortunately struck me on the eyebrow; had it been one inch lower I should have been a dead man. Of course I ordered the door to be opened, and what a spectacle did I behold!—a man stark naked and a raving lunatic. He had thrown all his clothes through the window of his cell, and with a loud yell he rushed at me as the door was opened, but before he could come sufficiently near to harm me, he was secured. A few days afterwards he was sent to Yarra Bend (the lunatic asylum), where he died.

I cannot refrain from alluding to the case of

the only other Welshman that we had, as there was something strangely romantic in our meeting after so many years. The man's name was Griffiths, and he was a native of Breconshire. This man, also, had been noted for his good behaviour, and his marked delight in reading. The library that we had on board the "Sacramento" was a most excellent one—ranging from the very best authors down to the Child's First Spelling Book. This man, from some fancied injury on the part of one of the warders, made a desperate attack upon Corporal Brady; and upon representations made to high quarters, he was ordered to be heavily ironed. I felt sorry for the man, for at that time I only knew that he had been a well-conducted prisoner. By chance, the afternoon of the day which had brought the order for putting leg-irons on Griffiths, I wandered to the lower deck, and there found him on his back, with two armourers at work, fixing sixteen-pounders to his ankles. Naturally enough I stopped to watch the operation. Bill Griffiths was a remarkably fine made man, and owned to forty-one years of age. As I watched the armourers fixing the clench-

ing nails, so as to secure the basil of the irons, I thought what a pity it was to be forced to punish such a man as that.

"Can you, Mister Charles," said Griffiths, gently raising himself on his elbow as he spoke, "can you see me ironed in this way?"

"What do you mean, man?" I replied, in the greatest astonishment, "by calling me Mister Charles? What do you know of me that you address me in that way?"

"Mister Charles," said Griffiths, "I was one of the postboys that drove you on your marriage day; and many is the time I have driven your lady's honoured mother."

Without making any reply, I turned away and went to my own rooms to seek in the great book the catalogue and the nature of his crimes. Griffiths had been found guilty of manslaughter, and his term of punishment was seven years only, and had he not recklessly committed the second offence, he would have been a free man in two more years.

A few weeks passed by, and I went into Melbourne, and of course paid my respects to my ever-to-be-remembered chief, Mr. P., of the

penal department. On that day, also, I drew out two months' pay—no inconsiderable sum. The chief clerk, moreover, entrusted me with some papers connected with the working of the department. My stay in the city was but short, for it was one o'clock in the afternoon when I went ashore, and I was again within a mile of where the hulks were lying, between Williamstown and Gilliebrandt's Point, by seven o'clock in the evening. It was rather dark that evening, and as I cautiously made my way along the half-finished road, to the spot from whence I intended hailing my ship, I heard loud cries of distress. Away I ran as fast as I could, guided by a light which evidently came from a lantern, and on the main road to Williamstown I found two policemen beating a man, who was upon the ground, in a most barbarous manner. Upon asking what was the nature of the man's offence, I was grasped by my neckcloth, and told that I was an accomplice. Naturally irritated, I struck the man full in the face, and dropped him, when his cowardly comrade felled me to the ground with his baton.

I knew no more until two o'clock the following

morning, when I found Doctor Williams and the stipendiary magistrate of Williamstown standing beside me as I lay upon a mattress in a cell at the police-station. Upon recovering my senses they told me that they heard of my *mishap*, and had come to bail me out—which bail I at once refused to avail myself of. I told them that I had done nothing to bring down such treatment as I had received at the hands of the police, and was determined to meet the charge. I thanked them for their kindness, and requested them, as a favour, that they would look at my clothes, which would too truthfully speak as to the lenient behaviour of the scoundrels who had placed me in that pitiable position. I also told my friends of the papers that I had about me, and of the money I had drawn from the Union Bank.

For more than an hour they entreated me to leave the station, but I would not. They then left me, saying that they should be with me in the morning before the sitting of the court. I again thanked them, and they passed through the door, the bolts of which were again drawn. Then turning myself round I was soon asleep.

CHAPTER XII.

Barbarity of the Police.—A Hedge Lawyer.—Fined by the Court.—Shameful Ill-Treatment.—Return for a Good Office.—Resign my Appointment.—Leave the Sacramento.—Again at Collingwood.—Meet with an Old Associate.—A Store at Richmond.—An Unfortunate Speculation.—New Scheme for raising the Wind.—A Late Supper.—Left by my Friend.—We never meet again.

AT eight o'clock on the following morning my friends were with me again; and it was not until they brought me a looking-glass that I was induced to quit the police-station. I was aware that my clothes were torn to shreds, but was not aware that my face was covered with blood, or that that circulating fluid had run down my neck from a wound in the back of my head. I was indeed a picture. However, they succeeded in taking me to the nearest inn, where I washed and dressed myself, and where I had some breakfast.

Whilst eating my first meal I was waited upon by one of those hedge lawyers that are so frequently found hanging about police courts. The vagabond informed me that he knew the entire case, and that he would defend me for two pounds.

"Very well," said I, "if you know the case, it is more than I do, and I retain you; but, mark me, I cannot swear to the man who struck me, for the whole affair was of such a sudden nature, and being knocked down, which I suppose rendered me insensible for a time, it appears to me as a dream; but this I know, I had a large sum of money about me, and Government papers in my pocket."

The lawyer told me that he would look to my interests and left me to finish my breakfast.

Putting aside my torn garments, I managed to make a very decent appearance as I walked towards the Court-house at Williamstown. I was within a hundred yards of the building when my friend the lawyer told me that I need not go into court. He said that the police had got a case of assault against me; that the injured man was frightfully disfigured, but that the feeling was in my favour, and if I would but only stay outside, near the door, in case I might be called on, all would go well. Like an ass, as I have ever been, I listened to him.

I had not been a quarter of an hour outside

the court when Mr. O'Leary came to me, rubbing his hands with great glee, saying that he had got me off by paying the penalty of forty shillings for being drunk; that the case looked bad as regarded the assault, but that ultimately it was dismissed; and he begged to congratulate me upon having got out of a very serious scrape, for the trifling sum of six pounds two shillings.

"How the deuce do you make it six pounds two shillings, Mr. O'Leary?" I asked. "You told me distinctly that you would defend me for forty shillings; and forty more for the drunkenness,—which, by-the-by, is false,—and youhave four pounds."

"The truth is, I had to bribe a very material witness, who was ready to swear that you drew a knife and that your conduct was most violent."

"Liar! scoundrel that he is! lead me to him," said I, taking O'Leary by the arm, "I use a knife! I tell you that I struck him with my fist! Now come with me to the police-station; they have my money and my papers, and I will then pay you four pounds, and not one fraction more."

I then walked towards the station, without deigning to listen to the lawyer's reiterated protestations of having bribed the witness.

The reader may fancy my consternation upon demanding my papers and money, to have only seven pounds thirteen shillings handed to me; and upon my insisting on seeing the men who had so shamefully ill-treated me, I was told that they were off duty and at home. I had nothing left me to do but to go and lay a formal complaint before the magistrates, which I did; and they promised to have the whole affair sifted.

The rascally attorney stuck to me like a burr; and it was not until I returned to the station, to warn the officers that the robbery they had committed would be brought home to them, that I paid him,—and then, to his infinite disgust, only four pounds.

With a temper by no means amiable I made my way to the spot whence I could hail the "Sacramento," with a full determination never to interfere in any one's business but my own: for each time that I have done so I have suffered for my pains.

I remember, in the year 1846 or 1847, I was

in Birmingham at the time of the riots, and passing up the Bullring, near the Nelson monument, (on the top of which was a four-pound loaf, painted red, with the printed words, "Bread or blood" beneath,) I saw a man strike a woman in the face, knock her down, and when on the ground kick her,—and that woman likely soon to become a mother. Leaving the friend with whom I was walking, I pulled the cowardly fellow from his wife, when he immediately turned upon me, and we had a regular fight; but decidedly the worst blow that I received in that affair was dealt by the lady I had succoured, who struck me a fearful blow in the eye, saying, "Take that, you blackguard, for interfering between husband and wife!" Finding that I was getting the worst of the fight, and that some of the crowd had their hands in my pockets, whilst others tried to trip me up, I managed to make a by no means dignified retreat amidst the jeers of the great unwashed.

Upon reaching the "Sacramento" the first thing I did was to make a report to the Inspector-General, who had already proved himself my greatest friend. The case was

inquired into, but no redress did I get, for they were four to one; each policeman swearing that I was inebriated, and that no more than seven pounds thirteen shillings was in my pockets when brought to the station-house.

It was a hard case to lose so large a sum of money, to have one's clothes torn to shreds, one's head broken, and locked up for the night, for attempting to save a man from being half murdered: it however turned out well for him, for he escaped. The fact was they deemed me the better bird to pluck; and they did pluck me.

In the month of March (the commencement of autumn in Victoria) I sent in my resignation. The fact was I had for some weeks fancied that there were signs of a break-up of my constitution, and I was anxious to return to England, and to see those who were near and dear to me.

On the 1st of April, having served one month, the prescribed time after the acceptance of my resignation, I quitted the "Sacramento" hulk; and so much had I gained the good-will of all the convicts that a request was made that

I would see them off to their work that morning, although my duties as chief officer had ceased. I did so; and one and all had some kind word to say as they passed by. As for Griffiths, the Welshman, he rushed up to me, and seizing me by the hand cried out, "God bless you, sir! we shall never see your like again."

But when all had taken their seats in the boats, and they were about to move off towards shore, guarded as they were, there burst forth from some hundreds of voices such loud expressions of good-will that I was glad to return to my cabin. Strange, thought I, that those men, so deeply steeped in crime, should have hearts assailable by kindness.

At eleven o'clock that day I landed at Gilliebrandt's Point, close to the quarries where the different gangs were working; and where, sixteen months afterwards, they murdered in cold blood my kind friend the Inspector-General; and three out of the men who had called down blessings upon my head were hanged for it, in addition to fourteen others. In the death of Mr. P—, Victoria lost her most efficient and most courageous

officer. But it was the death that was predicted he would die.

Upon reaching Melbourne I went to the office of the penal department, and saw Mr. P—. He told me that he thought me foolish to give up so good a situation, but as I had done so he advised me to return at once to England. My property had been for years, and is now, in the hands of trustees; so when I received my appointment under Government I wrote to my brother, through whose hands my remittances came, telling him to send me no more money. Common sense prompted the immediate taking of a berth on board the first ship bound for England; but I could not leave without knowing something of Carroll and his brother. Again at Collingwood I fixed my quarters; my old friends Lewis and Prosser, and indeed G—ll—m, were there; and all proved the sincerity of their friendship by their attentions.

Month after month rolled on, and no tidings came of Edward Carroll and his brother. Nothing either could I hear of Sotheron and my nephew; and I began to think that I was

indeed the only one of the original party who was left alive. Five months had elapsed, and spring had again commenced; when one day on taking up the newspaper I read of the arrival of the "Resolution." Little time did I lose in making my way to Sandridge, trusting again to shake my nephew and Sotheron by the hand; but I was destined to be disappointed as regarded the former, for he had accepted the appointment at Adelaide, (where they had touched) of emigration officer. Harry and I never met again; he died, poor fellow! of consumption in that colony a few weeks after I had sailed for England. The meeting of Sotheron and myself was of the warmest description. Thinking that I should naturally be astonished at not finding my nephew on board, his first words on shaking my hand were, "Harry is all right; he is emigration officer at Port Adelaide."

There is no doubt that the voyage was a dead failure; and how could it be otherwise, when there was a Stretton on board? so thought I at the time.

The first place that Sotheron went to on

reaching Melbourne were the offices of Messrs. Willis, Merry, and Company, where he found the chest containing the clothes he had ordered from his London tailor; and which had been brought by the identical vessel that they had boarded in the China seas, and had seen go down. Sotheron and I being about the same size (luckily for me) we were both fitted out to such an extent, that we actually once again appeared as gentlemen.

For some months Sotheron and I remained at Collingwood, and the funds were again getting low, when my friend received a large sum of money from England, with which he, in conjunction with another, took to a store at Richmond, two miles from Melbourne, and a very thriving township. Two men less likely to succeed as shopkeepers I never met, unless it was Carroll and myself. The sum that Sotheron gave for the goodwill of that store alone was eight hundred pounds, and I verily believe that they never took eighty pounds during the whole period of their occupation, which was about five months. But if he and his mate had but few customers who came with money in their hands

to purchase, they had plenty of friends who came without that useful article, ready to assist them in thinning the shelves of their burden. It was indeed ludicrous to see the elegant Ben Sotheron standing behind the counter, not knowing the price of one single article when asked by some stray customer who came, like an angel comes, but seldom. Should Wilson his partner and the shopman be both absent, he would say, in answer to the question, that he really did not know, but would ask his customer what he thought the article was worth, or how much he or she would give for it.

Some five or six hungry fellows (I amongst the number) used to dine every day with our ultra-liberal friend, and most satisfactory were the dinners to us, but not so to the partner (who, by-the-by, could say nothing, Ben having found all the money). He would ask us all what we would have for dinner; send one to the shelf, where preserved salmon and lobster sauce was to be found, another would be sent for preserved meats and potatoes, and I generally was despatched in search of the drinkables.

It was not to be expected that such a state

of things could last long, and the upshot was a general smash; and poor Ben Sotheron, who had embarked his eight hundred pounds in the trade, went to the wall, as my nephew had done before him. Everything was sold off, and Sotheron, four others, and myself knew not where to find a dinner.

Men cannot starve. About ten days after the stores at Richmond had passed from Sotheron's hands to those of a stranger, six of us were sitting together at an hotel called the White Hart, and not one of that party had a sixpence that he could call his own. Fox, to whom I have alluded as the sailor, and so well connected in Liverpool, was one of that party.

Opposite to the White Hart Inn was the Great American Circus, and decidedly I have never seen anything in Europe that could compete with the management of that establishment. To the White Hart, between each act, the people would come in by hundreds, and indeed one would believe, by the money which we saw thrown away, that unbounded wealth then surrounded us. There we were, six gentlemen in that house, and not one man had a penny in his

pocket, and that which we had wherewith to regale ourselves was upon the slender credit that Sotheron had managed to establish.

"This state of things will never do," said Fox, rising from his chair in a menacing attitude; "money I will have, and that to-night. Have any of you fellows pluck sufficient to accompany me to the Circus? If you have I will get money!"

Of course this little outbreak was received with a loud burst of laughter, and many were the inquiries in what manner, penniless as we then were, an entrance was to be made.

"Stay where you are for a moment," said Fox; "I'll do it, and if I this night have not a royal supper, my name is not Horace Fox of the Antelope."

With this he left us, and in ten minutes returned with three pass checks which he had obtained from men who did not intend returning to witness the conclusion of the performances. One check was given to a man by name Colville, another to myself, whilst Fox retained the third.

"Now," said Fox, "may Fortune only attend us, and you shall have as good a supper this

night as the Adelphi at Liverpool could produce."

"But what are we to do?" I inquired.

"Why," answered Fox, "beg from every well-dressed *old* gentleman that you see; lay it on thick; tell him that you have a sick wife and half a dozen babies; have lost all your money in sinking at the Avoca; that your friends are rich, and anxious for your return, and that you are only waiting for the arrival of the next mail to return to England to gladden the hearts of your parents."

With a scream of delight from those whom we left behind, Fox, Colville, and myself walked across the road, and made our entrance into the American Circus. It was agreed that we were to separate; that each was to try his best to "raise the wind," and that we were to rejoin our friends at the White Hart at the conclusion of the performances.

Fox and Colville were blessed with a more than superabundance of that very valuable gift vulgarly called "cheek," and up to that moment I had given myself credit for having a very fair stock of impertinence; but I know not how it was that night, I was not up to anything like

fun, and in fact I made no attempt to forage for my friends and self. The performances were concluded, and, as was agreed upon, we all met at the White Hart, where our friends were anxiously awaiting us.

"What have you done?" said Fox to me, in a most exulting manner.

"Nothing," I replied; "for I could not bring myself to beg."

"A pretty fellow you are to help a lame dog over a stile! Why, look here! I have got four pounds, and Colville can produce two-and-thirty shillings which he has scraped together. Well, never mind, old boy; the promised supper shall be had, and for once I'll be lord of the feast!"

With this he left us, to order the nightly repast. At one o'clock in the morning we six sat down to a most excellent supper; and I need not say that the five pounds twelve shillings were spent before we rose from the table; and when we quitted the White Hart we were as indigent of wealth as when we had entered.

With that reckless levity with which all in Victoria appeared to be imbued, we all separated,

with the exception of Ben Sotheron and myself, who retraced our steps to the house of our friend Lewis, at Collingwood, where we had been for some days staying.

In about fourteen days after our supper party at the White Hart the mail from England arrived; but no money did it bring for either Sotheron or myself. We were sitting at the same inn, I remember, on that afternoon, when the conversation turned, as usual, upon the subject of ways and means. For two or three hours did my friend and I talk on that most disagreeable topic, when Sotheron suddenly rose from his seat, forced his straw hat over his eyes, shook my hand, at the same time saying, "Stay here, I will be back in an hour!" and rushed from the house.

I fancied that my friend was a little excited all that day; but knowing him so well, I thought nothing of it at the time. For five hours I remained at the White Hart Inn, each moment after the expiration of the promised hour expecting to see him return; but no,—he never came, and I have never seen him since, although I have received a letter from him, which was written on

his arrival in England, two years and a half afterwards. In that letter he told me that he had met the captain of a merchant-ship, well known to him; that he had gone on board with him; that she had sailed that very day for Calcutta, taking him with him; and that he should reserve all that he had to say until we met, which would be shortly. We, however, *have never met since.*

CHAPTER XIII.

My Health Fails.—A Bad Speculation in Crown Lands.—Death of a Friend.—Resolve to Return to England.—Last Night in Australia.—A Strange Story.—Murder of the Inspector-General.

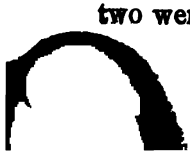
Of course I knew not what to think of Sotheron's unaccountable absence. Nothing was known of him at the banks, neither could his friend and partner, Wilson, give me the slightest information regarding him, and I began to dread the worst. Another dreary four months passed over my head, making sixteen since I had received any remittances from England. I had, upon getting my appointment under Government, directed my brother, who was my trustee, to send no more money out to me; and foolishly I suffered my pride to get the better of me, and I never wrote to state the position in which I was. My health and spirits were daily at this time becoming worse, and I looked forward to an untimely end, and without a friend, perhaps, to

cheer my last hours. My nephew was at Adelaide, in another colony, where, as I have said, he held the appointment of emigration officer, and where he died.

It was in the month of June, 1858, whilst on my way to the agents, where I thought perchance to find letters from England, a mail having arrived, I met my friend Carroll, who was in search of me. Our delight at meeting was unbounded, and only clouded by the intelligence that he had left his younger brother in Van Diemen's Land, where they had both been for some months.

Poor Edward, who had a friend with him, was looking anything but well, yet his spirits were high. He said that he had only landed that morning; had been to the bank, where he found his remittances awaiting him, and that he had, accompanied by his friend, who came with him from Hobart Town, been to the Government sale of Crown lands, and purchased an allotment.

I did not by any means admire his friend, who had a very sinister cast of countenance. The two were dressed alike, and everything they had



on was new. High patent-leather boots graced their legs, cabbage-tree hats and scarlet jumpers completed their attire.

I told Edward that I considered his purchase would be productive of no good; but he, poor fellow! thought otherwise, as it was at Collingwood, and he then asked me to go with him and endeavour to find it out.

Away we all three went, and after some hours we were directed to the spot, which turned out to be two feet under water, and in the driest time situated in a bog. The purchase-money was totally thrown away. I found out afterwards. that Carroll had bought the allotment at the instigation of the man whom he had brought over.

I remarked to Edward, as we were returning to Melbourne, that I considered him to be looking far from well, and that the best thing for him to do was to take his passage by the first ship bound for England; but this advice he would not listen to, and he took up his residence in Melbourne.

Edward Carroll having now become of age, it was high time for him to take possession of his property; and he told me that on the receipt of

his next remittance he should be prepared to start.

It was strange that my friend, who could so plainly see the alteration in my looks, could not discern the changes in his own features; and each week made sad havoc on his constitution. In a few weeks the expected money came, and poor Edward and I parted, never again to meet on earth. He reached his home and died, I was informed, in three weeks afterwards. His last moments were said to be all that could be wished.

All this time I had never written one line to my friends, I am ashamed to say; and the longer I deferred so doing, the more difficult was the task. At last a letter was put into my hands by Mr. Westley; it was from my brother, begging that inquiries might be made concerning me, for that my family believed me to be dead. That letter did indeed rouse me to something like exertion; and when on the following day I was sent for by the Inspector-General of the Penal Department, who, after some conversation, insisted upon my immediate return to England, and who, also, most generously

offered me the means of so doing, my mind was made up to sail by the first ship.

I shall, indeed, long remember the generous behaviour of the head of the department in which I served, as well as that of his brother, Captain P—t, of whom I have before spoken, for he had also, many months before, assisted me to a large amount—anxiously wishing me to return to England, but which I foolishly neglected doing.

I must also allude to another whose kindness is almost beyond belief, but who was not in the same station of life as my other friends, Mr. Daniel O'Connell, the proprietor of the Cambridge Arms Hotel, at Collingwood. To that man I was deeply indebted, and upon my telling him that I was about to leave the colony, and asking the amount of his claim, said, "Nothing, but *I shall lose* much by your departure." Determined not to leave with such a debt of gratitude upon my shoulders, I offered him a bill upon England for one hundred pounds, which he refused; but, after much trouble, I did succeed in making him accept eighty, which I found on my arrival in England, nearly five

months afterwards, had been paid, as well as numerous others that I had drawn.

Mr. O'Connell was a Roman Catholic, and had gone out to Australia with next to nothing; had amassed a large fortune, for his position in life, during the good times, and was esteemed by every one. May he live long to enjoy his wealth!

I cannot conclude my life in the Antipodes without relating one strange story which will give the reader a thorough insight into the class of people that gentlemen were there accustomed to associate with.

The Cambridge Arms Hotel at Collingwood, although the property of Daniel O'Connell, was managed by a man named Hackett, who had married his niece, and who was a magnificent looking fellow. The reason why O'Connell did not live in Collingwood was that he had another hotel in the city of Melbourne, where he had for years been doing a large business.

It was the last night but one before I was to sail, and I had passed the greater part of the day with the few friends I had at Dan O'Connell's house in Bourke Street. It was

very late when I left, and I foolishly refused a bed my kind host offered me, although there was every appearance of heavy rain. I had not reached St. Peter's Church, outside Collingwood, when the rain came down in torrents, and I had the greatest difficulty in making my way over the water courses, and through the muddy streets. At last I found myself at the entrance to the Cambridge Arms, the rain still coming down as if threatening to deluge the entire country. Whether it was the noise of the storm, or that all the inmates of that house slept more than ordinarily sound that morning, I do not know, but I could not make any one hear. I was, indeed, perplexed. The house of my friend Lewis was distant, and difficult to find in the darkness of that morning, added to which I scrupled in awakening up the family.

What to do I knew not, when a thought struck me that I would tap at the door of a man by name Tom Bragg, who lived nearly opposite. This Tom Bragg was well known to all of us. What *his* antecedents had been I shall not state, but this much I will say, he had the plainest woman for a wife that eye ever rested on.

"Tom Bragg," I cried out, striking the door with my fist, "get up, and for heaven's sake let me in. I shall be drowned."

"Tom Bragg is not here," said some one in a voice which was that of a female, and which I knew to be his wife's, "who are you that disturb folks at this time of night? Go about your business."

"It is I," I answered, "it is Stretton; for heaven's sake open the door; I cannot get into the hotel, and am wet through and through."

"Wait a moment, wait a moment," said she, and I saw with pleasure that a lucifer-match had been struck; "I'll let you in, I'll let you in."

In two minutes the door was opened, and I entered Tom Bragg's sitting-room, bed-room, kitchen, and all.

"Pray pardon me," said I, as I threw my hat on the ground, "but will you let me remain here until this storm is passed, for I cannot rouse any one up over the way?"

"Certainly I will, my poor fellow," said she, shutting and fastening the door; "but you don't think, do you, that my Tom will be jealous, for

I always tell him everything, and he is awfully passionate, as you know?"

"Not a bit," I replied, "I will make it all right with Bragg; and I know full well that had you refused me admittance he would have been angry."

"Very well then," she continued, "now look here; I will make up the fire, and you must lie on the ground whilst your things are drying. I can't put you into the other room, for it's full of potatoes; and whilst I'm away, pull off your clothes and wrap yourself up in a blanket from off my bed there. I sha'nt look at you, don't be afraid; but make haste, for it's not over warm at this time of year." Saying this she quitted the room, and I commenced divesting myself of my wet habiliments.

I could not help laughing as I tore off my last wet article of attire, and pulled the blanket from her bed, in which I wrapped myself. Oh! thought I, could my friends but see me now!

In less than five minutes Mrs. Bragg returned, her arms filled with bedding of every description, which she began arranging on the

floor; that done, she threw more wood upon the embers, which fortunately were still throwing out some warmth, and then jumped again in that bed from which I had disturbed her.

The first thing that I did was to hang my wet clothes on the backs of chairs and as near as possible to the fire; I then put on more wood, wrapped my blanket around me, and crept into one of the most comfortable beds that I have ever luxuriated in.

"Good night," said I, as I turned my back to the hearth, intending to go, if possible, to sleep; "I thank you much for your kindness, for indeed I know not what I should have done had you not kindly let me in."

"Never mind—never mind that," she replied, raising herself, and drawing a short black pipe from under her pillow. "I am going to have a puff before I go to sleep; if you want a smoke you will find one of my Tom's pipes on the mantelshelf."

Thanking Mrs. Bragg I refused, telling her that I had already indulged too much in that luxury for one day, and that I should try to sleep.

After she had wished me a very good night

(or rather morning) she struck a match, with which she set light to her tobacco, and in less than ten minutes she was nearly lost to all view by the fumes which she managed to create.

For some time I watched her. There she sat, upright in her bed, the personification of a chimpanzee, her dark face rendered doubly plain by a white nightcap with frills.

At last I fell asleep; and before I was well awake, Mrs. Bragg had arisen, had made up a splendid fire, had arranged all my clothes ready for me to dress, and had actually put the kettle on the fire, intending to give me my breakfast before I left her. When she saw that I was really awake, she told me that she was going out; that she should not be long, and begged that if *her* Tom by chance should come back before she returned, I would make all straight.

No sooner was the back of Mrs. Bragg turned, than I threw my clothes on hurriedly, intending to cross over to the Cambridge Arms, and there to enjoy the comforts of the toilette.

On the mantelshelf in Tom Bragg's room were the usual ornaments, which are invariably found in every cottage in England:—there was a shepherd and a shepherdess, the attire of the former certainly very unlike what mine had ever been; there was a very large lion, and a very gentle looking lamb. But the great attraction was the rest for Tom's watch, which was a plaster of Paris representation of the Royal Arms of England (it is true that Tom had scooped out the arms, leaving only the supporters)—and there his watch rested, between the Unicorn and Lion.

In endeavouring to get at a small pocket looking-glass, which was behind the only remnant of loyalty or royalty that Tom possessed, I had to move the watch-stand; when what should I see but a large parchment, which I at once recognized as a ticket-of-leave! It was not folded up; no, there it stood spread wide open. I could not resist casting my eye down to one corner; that corner was enough—*Infanticide!*—*Mary Bragg was a murderess!*

I had hardly put back the watch-stand when Mrs. Bragg re-entered. She had with her sundry

things with which to make a good breakfast, and of which she begged me to partake, but which I strenuously refused, telling her that I was anxious to get dressed and to go to Melbourne.

"Mrs. Bragg," said I, as I thanked her for her kindness, "why do you leave that parchment behind that watch-stand? There is no reason why every one should know what you have done."

And so I left the house.

In one half minute I was again in the Cambridge Arms. All questions as to where I had passed the night were soon answered; nothing was said as to my sleeping under Bragg's roof, and by eleven o'clock that morning I was again in Melbourne. My hours in Victoria were now numbered; and one more night only did I look forward to spend in that colony in which I had witnessed so many troubles. At half-past three o'clock that day I waited upon Mr. P—t, who had been so kind to me in every way. I thanked him again and again for his generous behaviour towards me; and turned from the Government offices with an unaccountable feeling of sadness. Was it that the oft-repeated suspi-

cion of my friend's dying a violent death haunted me? I do not know; yet true it is that six weeks after I had sailed, that noble-minded man was brutally butchered on the very spot where we had so often met.

CHAPTER XIV.

On Board the James Barnes.—Sail for England.—Death of a Little Girl.—Rounding the Horn.—Catching a Cat's Paw.—Death on Board Ship,—On Short Allowance.—Sight the Head of Kinsale. —Arrive at Liverpool.

RETROSPECTION.

"I might have been!"—oh! sad suggestive words!
So full of hidden meaning, yet so vain!
How sadly do they sound on memory's chords,
And waken feelings of regretful pain!
I might have been a wiser, better man,
With signs of well-won honour on my brow;
Had I adhered to nature's simple plan,
Or reasoned with myself, as I do now.

J. C. PRINCE.

THE following morning at eleven o'clock I left Collingwood accompanied by my friends Lewis and B—er, and made my way towards Sandridge off which place was moored that splendid clipper ship "James Baines," said to be the fastest vessel in the merchant service; and which registered 2,200 tons. B—er had frequently hinted that he would try and stow himself away on board of that ship,

and when once well away at sea declare himself; stating who he really was, and pledging himself to pay his passage-money on arriving at Liverpool. I urged him to do so, and it was agreed that he should remain in my cabin when the names of the passengers were being called over.

From some cause or another we did not sail that day, and my friend remained the night with me. Previous to retiring to rest I trusted two of my fellow-passengers with the secret, and they promised me their assistance; and had B—er's heart not failed him, he would have sailed in the same ship with myself. But no, when the bell rang the following day for all who were not passengers to leave the ship, he left me, saying that he would arrange matters so as to take a passage by the next mail (the "Lightning,") which was to leave Melbourne twenty-one days after us. He begged me on reaching Liverpool to go to his friends, and to apprise them of his speedy return home, which I promised to do. On Wednesday, the 20th of August, 1857, we sailed; and on the following day at twelve o'clock our pilot left us, saying,

as he went over the side, "I give you seventy-five days to do it in."

We gave the steamer which had towed us down the bay one rattling cheer; and with a ten knot breeze upon our beam we were fairly off for Old England. It was anticipated that we should round Cape Horn in less than a month, but we did not accomplish this under six weeks; and were becalmed off that desolate and inhospitable coast for some days. Here we had to undergo the most fearful cold, and where the sun only showed itself for two or three hours in the day. It was the second day after we were becalmed that a sad gloom was thrown over our ship by the death of a little girl, who was a great favourite with us all. There was great interest attached to her, for her father and mother had been killed by the falling of a tree at one of the diggings; which tree, although killing the parents, left untouched that little girl, ten years old, and a brother two years her junior in age, who was also on board our ship. The diggers (honour be to them) in a body adopted the little orphans, and raised a sum to send them

to England, where they had friends. At ten o'clock at night that little child was consigned to the deep; two days previously she had been romping on the deck with me.

At last the Horn was rounded, and we trusted to make up for our delay by falling in with the Trade Winds; but catch those Trade Winds we could not; and the line was not reached until we had been upwards of seventy days at sea. Again were we becalmed, and the weather was as hot, as it had been cold off the southernmost part of South America. Nevertheless the passengers did their best to amuse themselves, and I myself have pitched their wickets for cricket at a distance of seventeen yards apart on the main deck.

We had been becalmed fourteen days when a sail was noticed, and many were the conjectures what ship she could be. Our captain appeared to be excessively uneasy, and was downright angry when any one hinted that it might be the "Lightning," which was to leave twenty-one days after us. The whole of that day every eye was fixed upon that vessel, which was evidently drawing nearer and nearer to us, and at sunset she

showed her number, and proved herself to be our sister ship, thus catching us up after our having a start of twenty-one days. The disgust of our commander was indeed great, but no fault could be attributed to Captain McDonald; for whilst we had had contrary winds nearly all the way, the "Lightning" had fallen in with the Trades and had made a splendid run. Of course we had to put up with all kind of jokes and jeers, such as, "shall we lend you a tow-rope?" &c.; and so close did we lie alongside each other that I discovered my friend B—er, who had thought to come with me, was actually on board.

Towards three o'clock the following morning the "Lightning," catching a cat's paw, again began to move, and in less than two hours her stern light which she had hung out, was lost to view. It was strange that whilst the "Lightning" was gradually moving from us, not a breath of wind appeared to cause the slightest motion in our sails.

At nine o'clock a breeze sprung up, however, and with every appearance of freshening. At ten o'clock our royals were lowered, and before one o'clock in the afternoon we were running

under courses. Splendidly did our ship behave, and each day's reckoning was given to us; still our captain could not, or would not tell us where we were. He had no hesitation in giving us our latitude, but the longitude he chose to keep to himself.

About ten days after the "Lightning" had left us another death occurred. The person whom we now committed to the deep was a young man of good family from the county of Kent, who had been married only ten days previous to his embarkation to a very young American lady. That poor young fellow was buried in a perfect gale of wind, and every one on board appeared to feel for the young widow. Within a week, however, she was flirting on the poop with a married man, and in less than four months was back in Adelaide, from whence she and her husband originally came.

We had now been nearly one hundred days at sea, and the passengers were beginning to grumble, and fears were entertained that our provisions would run short. We had taken in at Melbourne one hundred and twenty sheep, seventy-five very fine pigs, seventy-five couples

of geese, and the same quantity of fowls, turkeys, and ducks, to say nothing of two bullocks and a milch cow, which latter had come out and returned again without ever touching land. So short were we running as regarded articles of drink that I was refused a bottle of porter upon the plea that that beverage was kept solely for that animal's use. On the one hundred and eighth day one solitary sheep was then on board our ship. Not a pig or a fowl of any description was there to be seen, and we were put upon short allowance of water. Great was the grumbling, and nearly all the passengers maintained that our skipper was out of his reckoning, and did not know where he was. In fact we were almost mutinous.

It was the middle of December, and the cold was intense; I well remember the insulting and threatening language that was given utterance to as Captain McDonald ordered men up to the fore, the main, and the mizen masts.

At twelve o'clock on the one hundred and ninth day the cry of "*Land ho!*" was heard from the main top, which cry seemed to electrify the whole ship. Standing on the poop among

many others, I strained my eyes, but nothing could I see. It was the same with the glass—no appearance of land could I make out; and it was not until McDonald gave me his glass and pointed in a certain direction that I saw something looming in the distance like a small cloud in the horizon. Upon my asking what land that was, he told me that it was the Great Head of Kinsale in Ireland. And he then begged me to go forward and to ask the grumbling passengers whether he was out of his reckoning or not.

With what delight did we run up Channel with a spanking breeze and at night we cast anchor off Holyhead, to await the steamers which were to tow us up to Liverpool.

While off Cork we were boarded by a pilot, who informed us that we were put down in Lloyd's List as lost, and that the underwriters had actually refused twenty per cent. to insure us, so long were we after our time. Of course numberless were the questions put to the pilot as to the "Lightning," and wonderfully astonished were we to hear that she had only reached her destination one day

before us, thus making a splendid race between the two sister ships from the line home.

No sooner had the pilot come on board, than I wrote to my mother and my brother, directing money to be sent to me at Liverpool, where I landed on the following day. We had hardly cast anchor in the Mersey when I saw some one forcing his way through the crowd congregated on our decks, and before many seconds had passed, I was heartily welcomed back to my own country by my friend B—er, who although sailing twenty-one days after me, had arrived one day before me in Old England.

CHAPTER XV.

Excitement on Landing.—Meeting with my Family.—Conclusion.

I CAN give the reader no idea of the state of excitement under which I laboured on putting my foot upon Princes Pier. Of course there was a large crowd collected to witness the landing of the passengers from the far-famed "James Baines," which was believed to have been lost, and which was known to have brought home the most valuable freight ever landed at Liverpool. Half mad I jumped into the first cab that I could see, giving orders to the driver to take me to the George Hotel, where I had so long been detained with the other passengers who had accompanied me on my outward passage to Australia, and where I arrived, as regarded outward appearances, a very altered man.

Some few days I spent in Liverpool; when at

last I accepted an invitation from my friend B—er, whose family resided in Cheshire, where I remained some days. From thence I started for Wales, and was met by my brother in the town of Abergavenny, who drove me to his home, seven miles distant, where my mother and daughter were waiting to receive me.

I shall attempt no description of the meeting that took place between mother and son, father and daughter, or even of that which took place between my brother and myself; but my delight in again reaching home, and of being with those whom I most loved on earth, was sadly clouded by the intelligence of the death of my only son, who expired at Constantinople, and by that of my wife's mother, which took place one day afterwards in Wales.

For some time I remained enjoying the hospitality of my brother's home, when I accompanied my mother up to London, where I had a considerable amount of law business to transact, for which I have a singular distaste; when I again returned to Wales to be present at the marriage of my daughter.

I have but little to say as regards my move-

ments during the succeeding eighteen months. My time was principally occupied in my old pursuits of shooting and fishing; and had I but remained in Wales to prosecute those amusements instead of listening to the wishes of that woman whom I have in the earlier part of this work described as my bane, I should not now have anything with which to reproach myself.

In a weak and unguarded moment I listened to "that Hecate of domestic h—lls;" and nine months out of the eighteen were passed in the Highlands of Scotland. I can with truth aver that during that time I never knew one hour's happiness.

The reader must not think that no overtures towards a reconciliation were made by me to my wife on my return from Australia. They were made; but they were unsuccessful. Had she but have listened to my entreaties, that one crowning error of my life would have been avoided.

However, my better feelings came to my aid, and with a thorough determination to shake off the cursed incubus which had ruined me both in mind and purse, I left her; although even to this hour I am pestered with her advances.

In thirteen months after I had succeeded in freeing myself from the thraldom of Miss B—'s presence, my wife died, and with deep regret do I state that I was denied the satisfaction of being with her in her last moments.

I have but little more to add, and my tale is nearly told. In the spring of 1860, I took unto myself a second wife, whose amiability of disposition gives fair promise that my future life will be one of perfect happiness. By that union I am blessed with two children; and if unwearied attention to the bringing up of my beloved ones, and unalterable affection for the one whom I have chosen as the partner of my sorrows and my joys, can in any way wipe away the remembrances of my past errors, I trust not to be found wanting. Great as my follies may have been, I feel that I have entered on a new sphere of action, and that it is—

"NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND."

THE END.

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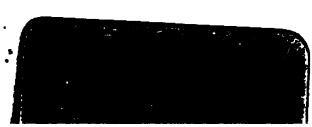
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